

MacIver



Pereira



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Cover: detail from painting *A Fall of Snow* by Loren MacIver
and detail from drawing *Somewhere Today* by I. Rice Perelra.

Frontispiece: above, portrait of I. Rice Pereira by Oliver Baker,
1952. Below, portrait of Loren MacIver by Mork Shaw, 1947.



Loren MacIver I. Rice Pereira

BY JOHN I. H. BAUR

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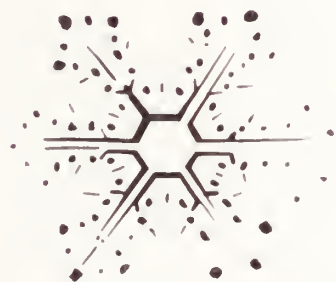
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THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

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Loren MacIver





VENICE. 1949. Oil. 59 x 93. Whitney Museum of American Art.

Loren MacIver

LOREN MACIVER speaks sparingly of herself and only a little less so of her work. Her mobile face with its wide, sensitive mouth is distressed at direct questions. "You know," she says, as if revealing the most confidential information, "I don't remember." Perhaps this is quite literally true, for few people live more spontaneously in the present or find such pleasure in the small, immediate circumstances of life. A mechanical mouse that dances, a stone that looks like a loaf of bread, a flower, a leaf, a decorated Swiss lollipop delight her and are the principal furnishings of her studio — otherwise immaculately bare except for her easel, a table, some straight chairs and an immense grand piano.

MacIver's pleasure in unexpected things is as infectious as a child's and it sometimes seems as if she deliberately sought to preserve a child-like innocence in both her paintings and her relations with the world. No one, talking with her or looking at her work, can doubt that this innocence is genuine, but it seems far from child-like in its essence — rather a mature, poetic wisdom that guards its secrets well. So her early life remains shadowy, perhaps because she prefers to keep it thus, perhaps because to her, as to the very young, it is truly remote and obscure in its chronology. She was born in New York City on February 2, 1909, the daughter of Charles Augustus Paul Newman and Julia (MacIver) Newman. Her mother, of Scotch-Irish descent, kept her maiden name, which Loren also adopted.

As far back as she can remember MacIver painted — casually and unselfconsciously, which is to say, like most small children. A few memories return to her — of inventing alphabets before she could write, of painting a derby hat with a sense of awe at its imposing blackness. When she was ten her parents, who seem to have encouraged, or at least not opposed, her painting, permitted her to enter Saturday classes at the Art Students League — the only formal art instruction she has had. Even that can scarcely be called formal since she spent most of her time wandering from one studio to another and recalls none of her teachers, only a kind of wonder at the variety of things that could be done from the model.

She left the League after a year but continued to paint in the spare time that her education at public school and two high schools permitted. Through her reticence there emerges an indistinct picture of a child possessed by an extraordinary imagination which she scarcely understood, although it was already shaping her future career. One indication was her early passion for the theater, a love which has never waned and which

led her at this time to design imaginary sets for Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and for a one-act fantasy by Dunsany, *The Glittering Gate*. But perhaps the clearest evidence is simply the fact that she continued to paint, freely and intuitively, at a time when almost every promising child artist either abandons painting or tries to conform to the pictorial admirations of high school — chiefly slick magazine illustration. MacIver never went through such a stage. Miraculously, she seems to have followed an unbroken line of development from childhood to maturity keeping intact her sense of wonder at the world's visual delights and her unconventional ways of recreating them on canvas. There has never been a period in her life when she would not have enjoyed painting a derby hat simply "because it was so black."

MacIver realizes, if it is pointed out to her, that such a consistent development through the normally fickle teens is exceptional, but she is quite unable to explain it. "Perhaps," she says, "it is because I never thought of painting as a career. I cannot tell you how casual it was. I never intended to be a painter. I just liked to paint." Even today she works in much the same spirit, unhampered by esthetic theory or artistic allegiances, painting essentially because she just likes to.

When she was twenty MacIver married the poet Lloyd Frankenberg, whom she had known in high school. Their first home was over a bakery at the corner of Eleventh and Bleeker Streets. For a year or two before, she had been painting in the studios of various friends but the first work that she has preserved, such as the unconventional portrait of her husband called *Sleep*, was done here in 1929, the year of her marriage. Since then they have moved often, though always within the limits of Greenwich Village, where MacIver's slim figure in faded blue jeans, looking a good deal like a small cowboy's, is now familiar.

In 1931 they discovered Cape Cod where they spent their summers for ten years. Since neither poets nor painters are likely to be affluent in youth, there must have been difficult times, of which neither speaks. Their home on the Cape, at North Truro, was a shack which they built entirely of driftwood collected on the beach. When nearby supplies ran out they gathered more at distant points, formed it into rafts and, picking an auspicious wind and tide, floated these down to their site. On the ocean side of the Cape it was not easy. With MacIver harnessed to the raft by a tow rope and Lloyd Frankenberg precariously poling to keep it off shore, they managed to amass enough supplies for a reasonably weathertight cabin. Heated by a wood stove, this was their only home during the winter of 1932. There was then no road near them and food had to be brought in by knapsack over a trail through the scrub pine. They did not try to winter there again but the shack remained their summer home until about 1940 when the war temporarily prevented its use. Recently they sold it.

Something of the bleakness and exhilaration of that early year on the Cape appears in MacIver's *Winter Dunes*, a seagull's eye view of their house and the tall figure of Lloyd Frankenberg striding along the beach. While the artist's technical skill and sense



WINTER DUNES. 1932. Oil, 24 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$.
Collection Miss Louise Crane.

of design were still only partially developed, many of the essential elements in her mature style are already perceptible. Large among these is her fantasy, her easy re-entry into the world of children. Here the naive drawing of the figure and the device of painting her whole local world — house, sea, husband and distant village — in one vastly compressed scheme are obvious borrowings from child art. They give the picture its fresh, ingenuous feeling tempered, however, by the more sophisticated handling of the landscape, which is painted with a decorative, oriental touch. The combination effectively rescues the canvas from oversweetness, a pitfall that MacIver occasionally skirts by a more perilous margin, as in her earlier *Alice*.



STRUNSKY HOUSE. 1935. Oil. 29 x 17.
Collection Mr. Lloyd Frankenberg.

Three paintings done on the Cape a year later, in 1933, show a marked change of approach. All are more soberly treated, more conventionally designed, less fantastical. It is as if she felt a need to discipline her imagination and perfect her technique through a closer study of nature. There was no essential sacrifice; the fragile mood, the delicacy of feeling were maintained, perhaps even strengthened. The chief difference was a new seriousness of purpose. Two of the trio, *Tern Eggs* and *Beach Plum Landscape*, forecast MacLver's recurrent interest in nature, seen both large and small. The former, especially, is significant because it is perhaps the first picture in which she invests quite ordinary objects with an aura of wonder and tenderness — a distinctive quality in much of her later work. Here it is achieved partly by the color but more by the arrangement, which suggests two precious stones mounted in a circlet of minor jewels. Two years later she achieved, in *Witchbowls*, a similar transformation of fishermen's glass net floats, collected on the beach, into a design of mysteriously glowing lights.

The third picture of 1933, *Douglas Roach*, is evidence of MacIver's early ability to portray people who interest her with an uncanny inwardness. This is not at all the same as capturing individual character, in the way that Eakins did, but rather a heightening of the mystery of personality, an expression of the indefinable spirit that shines fitfully behind humanity's "muddy vesture of decay." While she is unpredictable in her choice of sitters, one always senses a bond of humor, admiration or affection illuminating the portraits. Roach, for instance, was a Negro friend on the Cape, and a man of varied talents. As a part time wrestler, he achieved a degree of fame for his bright yellow trunks with a brilliant rising sun emblazoned on the seat. As a gardener, he called himself "the most promising man on the Cape," since he generally forgot to turn up when hired. Wearing the bright stocking cap in which she painted him, he was a frequent visitor at the shack where he came to bake cakes, a favorite avocation though not always a successful one since he refused to follow recipes. As a man of principles, he died of wounds received in the Spanish Civil War. It is quixotic, contradictory people like Roach and like her later clown friends whom MacIver paints best.

In the early 1930's the artist and her husband moved into a studio in an old house on Macdougall Street, owned by a Mr. Strunsky. The house facade, painted half transparently to reveal the interior of the rooms, is the subject of her *Strunsky House*, done in 1935. Here again MacIver turned in a new direction that contains many of the stylistic innovations which she was to carry further in her mature work. Chief of these is the flat, compartmented design, which reappears in several later cityscapes and in the *Votive Light* series. There is nothing geometrical in this structure; no lines ever meet at an exact right angle and all the boxes and squares are slightly askew as if to avoid any implication that life is orderly. Nevertheless, the sequence and rhythm of rectangles build a half-abstract pattern of great beauty while, in this instance at least, they serve the further purpose of suggesting the multiple relations of life in a city, the mystery of all the strange rooms surrounding the one brightly lit studio which was their home.

Here, too, MacIver began to experiment with soft color areas which blend and sometimes "bleed" into each other. These are partly a pictorial enrichment but they also seem intended to obscure the clear relation of forms and heighten the atmosphere of gentle mystery which pervades so much of her work. And finally, *Strunsky House* is notable because it is one of the first paintings in which the artist devised symbols to identify otherwise puzzling shapes. Her method, which she has used frequently since, is to reduce a familiar object to the fewest lines possible, devoid of all modeling, so that it is quite hard to "read" but, once deciphered, takes on symbolic meaning, a bottle marking one compartment as studio, a standing lamp as someone's more luxurious home and so forth.

Such clues are necessary because MacIver's paintings are never solely abstract or solely pictorial in conception. They always have a poetic motivation which depends as much on subject as on esthetic content. The artist prefers the formal arrangement

to speak first, impressing the eye with the sheer beauty of color and design. For this reason the objects must not be recognized too easily. But they must be read eventually or the painting achieves only half its meaning. Her cryptic symbols are one means to this end.

From 1936 to 1939, MacIver was on the Federal Art Project of the WPA. This was a happy and productive time, marked by her first public recognition. Emily Francis had hung her work in group shows at Contemporary Arts from 1933 or 1934, and a few collectors, including Miss Louise Crane and Alfred Barr, had bought paintings at this time or slightly later. In 1935 the Museum of Modern Art purchased her picture, *The Shack*, the first to enter a public collection, but it was not until 1938, three years later, that she had her first one-man exhibition at Marian Willard's East River Gallery.

In 1939 Miss Louise Crane lent MacIver and her husband a little "Conch" house which she owned at Key West, Florida, and there they spent that winter and a good deal of the following year. As always, the new experience found immediate, if oblique, reflection in MacIver's art. She did not paint the Keys themselves but she painted the

MOONLIGHT. 1939. Oil. 32 x 36. Private Collection.





THE POET. 1940. Oil. 34 x 29. Collection of the artist.

bright flowers on Ashe Street in a decorative, abstract design that made amusing use of the gaudy polka dot patterns with which local taste adorned the beer cans and other odd containers in which the flowers grew. She also enlarged quite faithfully on canvas the beautiful zigzag pattern of a tent olive shell, which they bought at a local shop. (In spite of its misleading name this is a sea shell, about three inches long, with a luminous brown surface patterned all over with "tents.") Neither of these pictures seems entirely successful, *Ashe Street Blooms* because it relies rather heavily on a conventional kind of decorative abstraction; *Off a Tent Olive Shell* because it relies equally on a natural pattern, insufficiently translated into terms of painting. Both were experiments which she did not pursue further.

On the other hand, *Moonlight*, a nocturnal vision of the interior of their Conch house, has a full measure of MacIver's delicate magic. The distortions, though remotely related to Picasso, flow naturally from the artist's urgent need to communicate the moon's transforming power, its necromancy in changing a familiar scene into a mysterious world where old relations vanish and strange ones take their place. The picture is perhaps her closest approach to expressionism, though of a very personal kind. Like the other Key West canvases it is somewhat apart from the main line of her development.



HOPSCOTCH. 1940. Oil. 27 x 35 $\frac{7}{8}$. Museum of Modern Art.

It is difficult to determine the exact moment at which an artist reaches his full powers. In MacIver's case the year 1940 and the painting *Hopscotch* make a reasonable claim to be the starting point of her artistic maturity. She was back in New York after her Key West experience and seems to have brought to the city a fresh eye and a clearer awareness of her own direction.

Hopscotch is, in many ways, one of her most remarkable accomplishments. The flat, fantastic pattern, somewhat resembling a prehistoric monster consuming numbered chalk squares, is both puzzling and beautiful. As in much of MacIver's best work, one senses first the handsome design and only gradually perceives the poetic motivation. The hopscotch lines are the clue. They lead to a realization that this is pavement, then to the further awareness that this is blistered pavement, not the odd creature of one's first impression. Yet something of that early image lingers, and the mystery of the painting's ultimate meaning grows rather than diminishes. The fragile child's game lying lightly beside the decay of solid asphalt suggests multiple interpretations which are elusive because they are essentially visual, not literary. MacIver achieves here a truly pictorial poetry wrought by a most difficult balance between suggestive design and a concrete image of utmost realism.

A very different picture of the same year, evidence that she was still experimenting, is *The Poet*, a symbolic portrait of Lloyd Frankenberg. Clad in a toga of soft red and blue, his head turns miraculously into the neck of a bottle, from which small bouquets of flowers — budding poems — issue. Such paintings have led several critics to group MacIver with the surrealists, but in this case it seems juster to see a gravely fanciful tribute to her gifted husband. Indeed none of MacIver's work shows more than a tenuous link to the dark probings of orthodox surrealism, and she has never been tempted by that movement's automatism.

While MacIver has occasionally returned to nature for her subjects, the city has been her principal theme from 1940 to the present. Unlike the New York realists, who painted its picturesque aspects, and even more unlike the futurists, who tried to capture its modernity, MacIver's attitude is oblique, poetic, filled with wonder at its beauty and a child-like delight in its small miracles.

Sometimes, though rarely, the artist paints a panoramic portrait of New York, like *The City* of 1941. Here, as in some of her early work, is a youthful world, full of odd little figures, more dolls than people, and a great store of amusing detail. Everything has a kind of story-telling significance. The shop windows can be identified, again through her use of symbols; the blocky pyramids, for instance, are cans and indicate grocery stores. Even the color has this sort of meaning, the darker bands behind the carts and trucks representing the darker color of the streets. Yet it was a subtle eye and a sophisticated hand that fitted all this incredible detail together, like the pieces of an immensely complicated puzzle, to make a flat design that vibrates with a pictorial life of its own.

For the most part, however, MacIver's paintings of the city contain no people and are focused on small, inanimate objects in which she has found an unexpected beauty that often carries with it poetic implications, as in *Hopscotch*. "Quite simple things can lead to discovery," she once wrote in a much-quoted statement for the Museum of Modern Art's *Fourteen Americans* exhibition catalogue. "This is what I would like to do with painting: starting with simple things, to lead the eye by various manipulations of colors, objects and tensions toward a transformation and a reward . . .

"My wish is to make something permanent out of the transitory, by means at once dramatic and colloquial. Certain moments have the gift of revealing the past and foretelling the future. It is these moments that I hope to catch."

Perhaps the key word here is "transformation." In a series of canvases done between 1940 and 1948, MacIver has changed an ashcan, a pushcart, church votive lights, a gas stove, a studio skylight and a battered window shade into images which reward the beholder with a sense of the forgotten beauty in commonplace things. To do this she has used many different means, varying her style widely to fit the mood of each subject. In *Ashcan* and *Skylight* the design is quite abstract, almost geometrical were it not for

THE CITY. 1941. Oil. 38 ¾ x 55. Pierre Matisse Gallery.





WINDOW SHADE. 1948. Oil. 43 x 29.
Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

the irregular color patches of the clinkers which glow like a bouquet in the former, and the ghostly wash which waves behind the rigid grillwork of the latter. At the other extreme are *Fiery Rings* (the stove) and *Window Shade*, which are painted with a meticulous realism. Yet how far from realistic they are in effect. The shade's luminous button glows hypnotically within the rectangular composition and its light is echoed in the bright scratches that mount like the tracks of a mysterious bird.

Somewhere between these stylistic poles are *Pushcart* and the various votive light pictures. The former is dark and rich, more opulent in its alternation of blacks with glowing color than anything the artist had done before. The design is quite abstract, made entirely of stripes, circles, triangles and the simplified ovals of the fruit, its severity

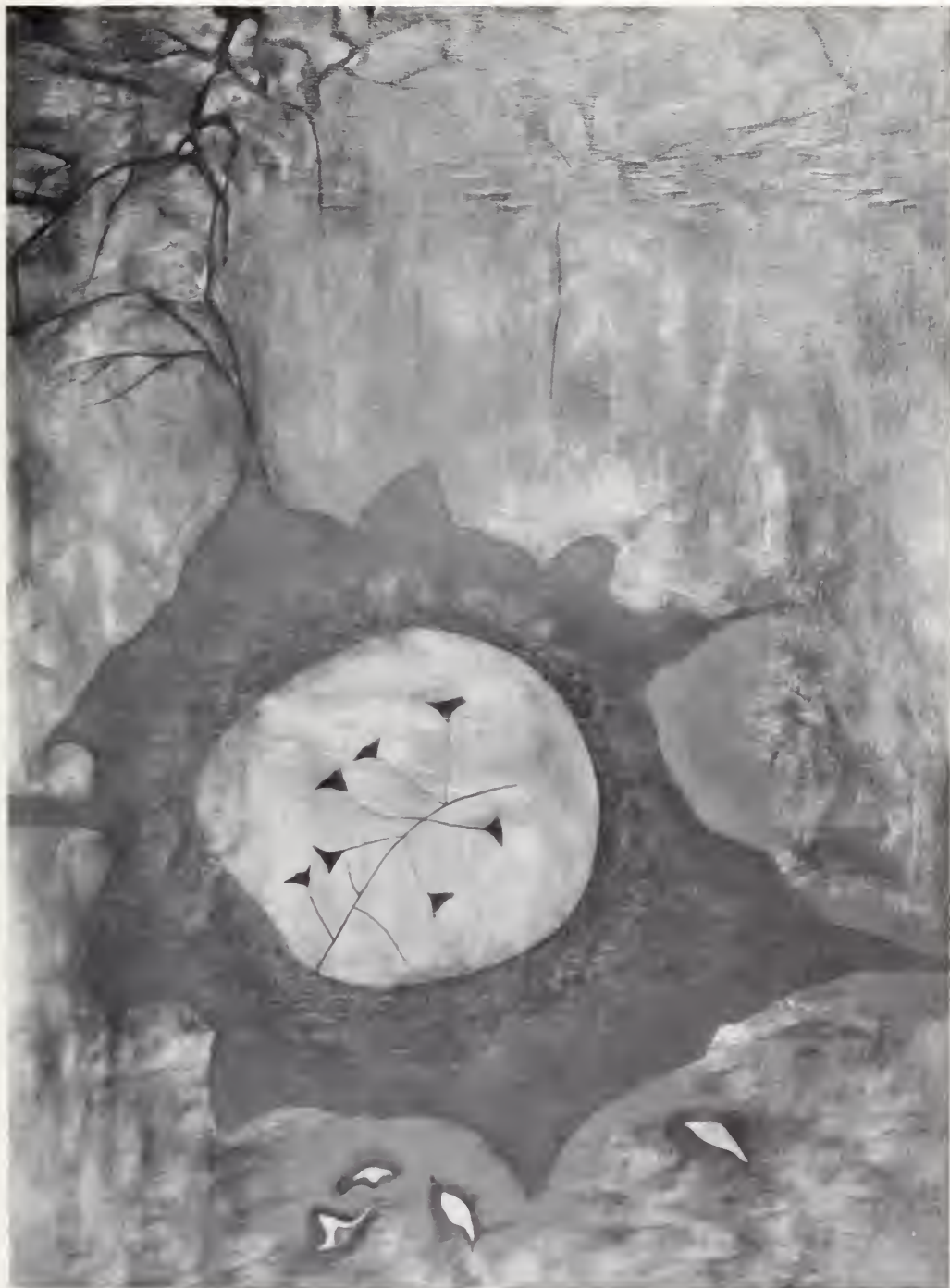
relieved only by the long undulating silhouette of the load. Yet every form is recognizable, none entirely arbitrary. Even the kaleidoscopic pattern of reds, purples, blues and greens behind the wheels is, MacIver explains, the colored wrappings from the fruit which the peddlers push between the spokes when business is brisk. Thus, like so much of her work, it has a secondary and warmly human meaning: this has been a good day for the pushcart man.

The several *Votive Lights* — in red, green and blue versions — are also flat, semi-abstract designs, softened here by the flicker of the candles. MacIver's "symbols of constancy." Yet again they are intimately related to the actual votive lights which she has observed near the altars of Catholic churches, even to their ranked arrangement in tin frames and their three colors, which have symbolic meaning in church ritual. For the artist, too, each of these colors gives a quite distinct feeling. It was for this reason primarily that she undertook her different versions.

Comparing these three groups of paintings, which overlap in date, it becomes apparent that MacIver's widely ranging style is dictated not by an esthetic program but by the varied nature of her subjects and her constant aim to reveal both the visual beauty and the human significance of her material in terms best suited to it. Critics have seen

RED VOTIVE LIGHTS. 1943. Oil. 20 x 25 5/8.
Museum of Modern Art, James Thrall Soby Fund.





PUDDLE. 1945. Oil. 40 x 29. Collection Mr. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.



TREE. 1945. Oil. 40 x 25 $\frac{7}{8}$. Collection Mr. James Thrall Soby.

influences in her work of artists as far apart as Odilon Redon and Paul Klee. Certainly she is well aware of the great art of past and present and, like virtually every living painter, has felt its impact in a general way. But she quite rightly denies that anyone has been her model or has exerted a decisive influence on her, a fact which seems amply corroborated by her very flexible and personal style.

In the same years (1940-48) that MacIver was painting these canvases of the city, she also turned occasionally to nature. She has an abiding delight in flowers and often renders them quite simply and realistically, as in her *Mountain Laurel*, which has no overtones beyond its own drift-like beauty. At other times her imagination embroiders poetic concepts on natural themes. Her *Fall of Snow* enlarges the flakes to crystals, sees them shining bright with color against the sky and melting silently into the city's lilac darkness below. The spring buds in *Tree* are like candles tipping the branches. Many of these subjects were observed in the city and gain a special poignance by contrast with the surrounding concrete and steel. Her *Tree* was actually a low bush behind an iron fence near 61 Perry Street, which has been her home since 1942. But in the painting both railing and shrub have grown in strength and become a subtle opposition

JIMMY SAVO'S SHOES. 1944. Oil. 22 x 30. Collection Dr. and Mrs. Morton Singer.



of forces. Similarly, in *Puddle*, the fallen twig of a Ginkgo tree lies like a frail skeleton in a rain pool cradled by the cracked city pavement.

How MacIver conceives these memorable images is a question she finds difficult to answer. In some cases they are the result of many experiences which gradually build up and enrich each other until they demand pictorial expression. Thus she has long loved pushcarts and old window shades and no one of either was the fuse that ignited those pictures. More often, however, a single, specific sight moves her with sudden force; the tree was a real one, the Ginkgo leaves in the rain compelled her to stop and make a sketch of the way a dark stain spread around them on the pavement. This does not mean that the painting which grows from such an experience is related only to the initial revelation; it still draws on other recollections which alter and nourish it. But it may explain why certain of MacIver's canvases have so immediate and urgent an impact, still preserving through their mutations the excitement of the artist's first conception.

Ever since she was a child MacIver has loved the circus and especially clowns. At about this time she made the acquaintance of two who were the inspiration for several of her most notable pictures. *Jimmy Savo* is certainly one of the best in MacIver's gallery of intimate portraits. The eloquent hands, the wistful face with its wide, almost feminine mouth (very much like MacIver's own) are in subtle contrast to the gaping collar, the fringe of hair and battered hat. This is the kind of opposition, sensitive and understated, that MacIver achieved in *Tree* and *Hopscotch*, and it makes the picture much more than a likeness. Indeed it was painted from a quick sketch done at a night club where Savo was appearing, aided only by a pose of about an hour at the studio when nearly finished. Like many of her best portraits it has an introspective quality emphasized by the slightly blurred features and the wide, unseeing eyes.

In the same year, 1944, MacIver painted an equally moving portrait of *Jimmy Savo's Shoes*, immensely long in relation to his slight form and so expressive that they seem to evoke his complete personality. She enjoys telling how she rushed them home in a taxi between performances, since they were his only pair, and of the great variety of things she found stuffing the toes. "Really, dear," said Savo when she mentioned it to him, "I haven't been in there recently myself."

The other clown whom MacIver admires greatly is Emmett Kelly at the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Like Savo, he posed only briefly for his portrait, this time backstage with a giraffe peering over the canvas dressing room wall and dropping shreds of hay on her as she worked. But the monumental likeness which resulted is certainly one of the fine American portraits of our day. Kelly's principal departure from conventional clown makeup, *The New Yorker* once reported, "was his facial arrangement, which revolved around an expression so bedraggled and hopeless as to wring sympathy from a Hottentot. The line between horror and humor," it added, "is immeasurably thin and mysterious." It is this expression and this delicate balance which the artist has succeeded in transferring to canvas. The tattered clothes and the slash of



EMMETT KELLY. 1947. Oil. 40 x 32. Collection Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger.



NAPLES AQUARIUM, 1949. Oil. 31 x 63. Pierre Matisse Gallery.

a mouth weigh precisely against the sad eyes, again blurred and sightless, and the dispirited sag of the whole figure to the left. Withal, a certain bigness, vast simplicity and tender warmth make it a memorable image.

In one of his most famous acts Kelly sits in the center ring of the huge arena entirely alone — dwarfed, pathetic and ridiculous. This is the moment MacIver chose for her other Kelly painting, called *Circus*. Here, however, the figure is shadowy and of secondary importance. The artist's interest seems more deeply engaged in the whole scene and in the variety of puzzling shapes which she can devise from circus gear. Two particularly baffling ones are the eerie face at the lower right and the odd machine at the lower left. The former, she explains, is a disembodied sample of clown makeup, the latter a bobbing duck cart used by the clowns.

MacIver's material success grew rapidly during this period. In 1940 Pierre Matisse became her dealer and has given her a series of one-man exhibitions. In 1941 the Museum of Modern Art commissioned her to do the "sets" for four Coffee Concerts in the auditorium. These were drawn in pastel on black paper, then made into colored slides and projected on a screen behind the performers. The designs were linear, bright in color and made a strikingly effective use of Voodoo symbols, gay South American motifs and the like.

As MacIver's reputation grew she received a number of commercial commissions. Illustrations for an article in *Town and Country* in 1945 led to two cover designs for the same magazine and later a cover for *Fortune*. She has also done several book jackets, a poster for the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and some six Christmas cards. She has designed a "Hopscotch" rug (on which the game can actually be played), the title page for a limited edition of Robert Frost's *Steeple Bush* and a series of window backdrops on musical themes for Bergdorf Goodman. Her most ambitious projects have been two mural commissions, one for the S.S. *Argentina* in 1947; the other, four panels for American Export Line ships, done the following year. The latter are supremely deft and gay — quite without the graver implications of her easel painting. Bottles, toys, marine forms, tropical flora and fauna are scattered lightly over the long narrow canvases. Everything either floats or swims or sways and the apparently casual designs are knowingly handled to create a rhythmical motion as animated as dancing waves.

In 1948 MacIver, with her husband, made her first trip to Europe. They spent about two weeks in Paris, going to the circus, galleries and museums, where the artist distributed her admiration impartially, claiming no favorites among the old masters. From Paris they went, via Provence and Antibes, to Italy for about a month. There they stayed principally at Rome, Naples, Florence and Venice with shorter visits to the hill towns and a call on Jimmy Savo and his wife Tina, whose father had given her a small castle (because as a girl she had always wanted to live in one). The last leg of their trip took them to London, Ireland and Scotland.



DUBLIN AND ENVIRONS. 1950. Oil. 48 x 33.
Pierre Matisse Gallery.

Maelver did no painting in Europe but she stored up a great many impressions by means of the quick sketches which she habitually uses to fix an idea. Quite accurately she calls these "scrawls" — a few pencil lines which do no more than indicate the placing of the main masses and the principal lines of motion. Sometimes they are filled in with crayon or watercolor. More often she uses rapidly pencilled color notes.

In 1949, the year after her return, Maelver painted furiously, turning out more and larger canvases than she had ever done in a like period. These were mostly the fruit of her trip: *Cathedral*, *Coal and Wood*, *Paris*, *The Fratellini*, *Venice*, *Naples Aquarium* and, in 1950, *Dublin and Environs*. The European experience not only stimulated her activity; it also affected her in other ways. As a group these pictures are not only bigger



THE FRATELLINI. 1949. Oil. 70 x 65. Pierre Matisse Gallery.

in size but seem bolder in conception and design, more varied in color, more self-assured and perhaps less sensitive than her earlier work — at least less the “shy, tiptoe art,” to borrow James Soby’s apt phrase, of paintings like *Hopscotch* and *Window Shade*. MacIver later returned partially to her earlier direction, but for the moment she gave herself completely to the vivid impressions of a traveller in a foreign land.

Many of these big canvases are extremely handsome in color and design. The sweeping panorama of *Venice* with its multi-hued sail in the foreground, its iridescent



OIL SPLATTERS AND LEAVES. 1950. Oil. 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 56. Pierre Matisse Gallery.

water and its buildings rising from the sea like a shining vision, is perhaps the most sensuously beautiful picture she has ever painted. *Cathedral*, inspired by a visit to Chartres, plays the rich colors of stained glass against mossy gray stone in an abstract design that suggests the vertiginous feeling of looking upward at its soaring height. In *Naples Aquarium* there is a new luminosity, achieved partly by the contrast of the dark setting with the brilliant sea anemones, partly by her use of color which “bleeds” slightly along the strange creatures’ edges, as if they were actually glowing.

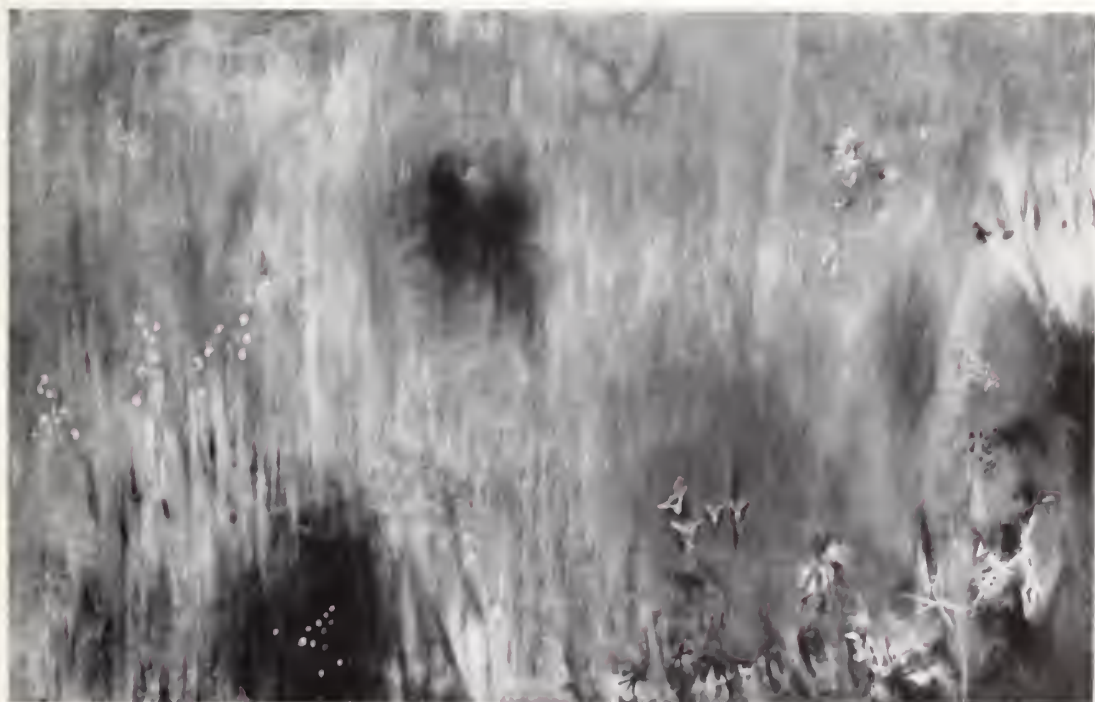
Clowns have always drawn MacIver like a magnet and in Paris she and Lloyd Frankenberg spent many evenings at the Cirque Medrano, which is the setting for *The Fratellini*. It was “a little red plush place,” explaining the pervading color of the picture. While she has not attempted to characterize the two great clowns as profoundly as Savo or Kelly, she has adroitly suggested their stage personalities by painting François (“the elegant type”) as a delicately posed triangle, Albert (“the coarse type”) as a loosely flapping apparition with the sequin on his eyelid glowing as magically as the button in *Window Shade*.

Most of this group are rather realistic, or at least quite easily deciphered, but in one of her last European paintings, MacIver returned to a more abstract and symbolic style. *Dublin and Environs* requires study and even some help from the artist before one can identify the dominant cross as stone walls, the streak of green as the color of fields (also needed, she explains, to pull against the sway of the cross), the bottle as "Paddy's Whisky," the shapes at the lower right as "fish or maybe potatoes." The numerous circles grew from the prevalence of that form in Irish architecture and other arts, including the cakes with mushroom decorations which fascinated her.

Since the European pictures MacIver has returned to her old themes, often carrying into them, however, the richness and opulent color of *Venice* and *Cathedral*. It is as if her eye now yearned for purely visual beauty more than for the wistful or poignant contrasts that she sought before. The minutiae of the city that have recently appealed to her have not been battered window shades and cracked pavements, but the rainbow hues of an oil slick, the fiery lights reflected from raindrops on a fire escape or on the windshield of a taxi. In her new pursuit she has gained a technical skill in capturing effects of sparkle and iridescence, which is at times almost incredible.

Oil Slick, the first of two pictures on that theme, introduces a new technical device which the artist has found useful in other recent paintings. The dark center, from which

EARLY. 1952. Oil. 33 x 52. Pierre Matisse Gallery.



the oil spreads, is glazed to a rich transparency. But the jagged rings of bright color that spread out from it are painted very drily and have a surface almost like pastel. The center, she explains, is a thing you can stare at fixedly but the iridescence is best seen with a light glance, obliquely, in passing. Nevertheless she did not use the same method in the second picture, *Oil Splatters and Leaves*, which is glazed throughout and hence somewhat richer. The two differ in other ways. The former has a half symbolic feeling, perhaps because of the monumental way in which it spreads its enlarged design across the whole canvas. The latter is more decorative in its undulating rhythm, more poetic in its juxtaposition of leaves and stains.

No one but a Japanese artist has painted rain so successfully as MacIver. In the picture titled after a line of poetry by E. E. Cummings, "*the streets turn young with rain*," it falls with the impetuous freshness of a spring shower. In her two *Fire Escape* paintings it slants through the night with a rush of falling water that is almost audible. The simple rectangular design of the latter recalls earlier work, like *Window Shade*, but here it is illuminated not by a single glowing button but by a whole string of jewel-like drops reflecting with various brilliance the light from the studio hall. Rain reflections are carried even further in *Taxi*, certainly one of her most imaginative works. The lower three-fourths of the canvas are blue darkness, empty except for a pale glow from the side windows and the curling smoke of two cigarettes. But the streaming windshield is like a display of fireworks, an iridescent blaze of yellows, greens, reds and blues from refracted lamps and neon signs.

MacIver's growing interest in luminous color, in glowing and sparkling light, is apparent in many other subjects beside her city themes. In this respect, *Circus* of 1950 makes an illuminating contrast to *Circus* of 1947. No clown, indeed no recognizable figure appears in the later picture, which is scarcely more than two circles of brightly colored specks, a little difficult to interpret until one realizes that these are spotlights trained on the distant audience and picking out their multi-hued costumes.

In her recent nature subjects, too, a similar interest is evident. No longer are her trees and flowers in conflict with the city; MacIver has gone to the country to find them in their more luxuriant state and has painted them with quite unreal luminosity. Her *Hyacinth Bulbs* gleam phosphorescently against their dark background, which was not intended, the artist says, to represent night so much as to suggest, by contrast, the sudden speed with which the flowers emerge from their rock-like sheaths. The lily-of-the-valley in *Early* shines like the hyacinth bulbs, and the red maws of the young robins radiate a red glow into the darkness around them. Only in *Bamboo*, a glimpse of spring foliage seen through the slatted window shade of her bedroom, has she returned to city-bound nature, but even here the feeling is gently lyrical, a study in harmony rather than contrasts.

MacIver has continued to paint occasional portraits. Among these her likeness of their poet friend, E. E. Cummings, stands out as a sensitive *tour de force*. Cummings



TAXI. 1952. Oil. 48 x 28. Pierre Matisse Gallery.



NEW YORK. 1952. Oil. 45 x 74. Pierre Matisse Gallery.

posed for her twice but she was not satisfied with the result and did the present version without a sitter. Here the figure is drawn entirely in pencil over the partly wet paint of the background, so that some of the lines are lightly incised in the pigment. Around the delicately drawn head and hand she has pencilled fragmentary quotations from his poems, which set the mood for the whole picture. "Spring is like a perhaps hand (which comes carefully out of Nowhere) arranging" is like Cummings' own disembodied hand, while MacIver's surface of cool greens, yellow-greens and pinks is an echo of "the sky was can dy lu minous edible . . ." Like many of her recent things, this one is painted rather thinly over a dark ground, which gives a surprising richness to the pale hues on top.

One of the last canvases to leave MacIver's easel is a new panorama of the city at night which seems to combine the best qualities of both her early and late work. Below a frieze of shadowy, darkened skyscrapers she has drawn a long line of characteristic symbols: a leaf, a key, a neon lobster sign, a shoe, a hat. Isolated in the right foreground, a strange, caterpillar-like object casts a pale yellow glow into the surrounding darkness. It turns out to be the kiosk of the Christopher Street subway station, and the pattern of glowing colored glass at the left comes from the same source. In its sensitive restraint and its cryptic symbols of absent humanity, *New York* has all MacIver's old poetic feeling; in its luminosity, its boldly unconventional design and its immense technical skill it is beyond anything she could have done before.

Also fresh from her easel, indeed still unfinished when this was written, is an extraordinarily different picture called *Les Baux*, her romantic reconstruction of the wild village of that name cut into the bauxite cliffs near Nîmes in southern France. Once a headquarters of Provençal poetry, site of a medieval court of love, it is now a ghostly village of caves and rocks which felt to the artist like moonlight, even on a summer afternoon. To capture its strange unreality she has painted an abstract image of fantastic crystalline forms and great shafts of light, rich in shifting colors despite the predominantly blue tonality. Except for its luminous opulence it marks a departure from anything she has yet attempted.

Looking at *Les Baux* and *New York*, so completely unlike in spite of the fact that they were done within a few months of each other, one is struck again by MacIver's absolute indifference to established styles and movements. Her persistent search for a visual beauty wedded inseparably to the mood of each changing subject continues to create unpredictable solutions as endlessly fresh and perceiving as her own poetic eye. In terms of that search her artistic development has been supremely consistent, for her images enter ever more deeply into one's consciousness, dissolving the film of stale custom and bestowing a new awareness of the world's bright miracles.

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

The arrangement is chronological. The medium is oil on canvas unless otherwise noted. The dimensions are in inches, height preceding width. An asterisk indicates that the work is illustrated. Where the owner is not given, the work has been lent by the Pierre Matisse Gallery.

Certain works are for sale. Prices will be furnished on request.

- 1 SLEEP. 1929. 20 x 24 $\frac{1}{8}$. Lent by Mr. Lloyd Frankenberg.
- 2 ALICE. 1931. 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by Mr. Jack D. Tareher.
- * 3 WINTER DUNES. 1932. 24 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{8}$. Lent by Miss Louise Crane.
- 4 BEACHPLUM LANDSCAPE. 1933. 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by Dr. M. R. Buchman.
- 5 PORTRAIT OF DOUGLAS ROACH. 1933. Oil on wood. 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. R. Kirk Askew, Jr.
- 6 TERN EGGS. 1933. 8 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.
- 7 SHACK. 1934. 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 24. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art.
- * 8 STRUNSKY HOUSE. 1935. 29 x 17. Lent by Mr. Lloyd Frankenberg.
- 9 WITCHBOWLS. c. 1935. 18 x 24. Lent by Mr. A. E. Chipley.
- 10 KEY WEST ARRANGEMENT. 1939. Pen and ink, watereolor. 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$. WPA Art Program, courtesy the Museum of Modern Art.
- *11 MOONLIGHT. 1939. 32 x 36. Lent anonymously.
- 12 OFF A TENT OLIVE SHELL. 1939. 14 x 20. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Marvin M. Notkins.
- 13 ASHE STREET BLOOMS. 1940. 23 x 44.
- 14 BLUE DUNES. 1940. 41 x 31. Lent by the Museum of Art, University of Oklahoma.
- 15 ETRUSCAN VASES, CASE No. 40. 1940. Oil on fabricated board. 42 x 40 $\frac{1}{4}$. Lent by Miss Louise Crane.
- *16 HOPSCOTCH. 1940. 27 x 35 $\frac{7}{8}$. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art.
- *17 THE POET. 1940. 34 x 29. Lent by the artist.
- 18 THE SIDEWALK. 1940. 40 x 32. Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art.
- 19 VOTIVE TABLE. 1940. 28 x 32. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel S. Hauge.
- *20 THE CITY. 1941. 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 55.
- 21 SUNDAY. 1941. 23 x 21. Lent by Mr. Lloyd Frankenberg.
- 22 A FALL OF SNOW. 1943. 41 x 28 $\frac{7}{8}$.
- *23 RED VOTIVE LIGHTS. 1943. Oil on wood. 20 x 25 $\frac{5}{8}$. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, James Thrall Soby Fund.
- 24 ASHCAN. 1944. 30 x 24.
- 25 PUSHCART. 1944. 59 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 37.
- 26 PORTRAIT OF JIMMY SAVO. 1944. 44 x 32. Lent by the Herman Shulman Collection.
- *27 JIMMY SAVO'S SHOES. 1944. 22 x 30. Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Morton Singer.
- 28 BLUE VOTIVE LIGHTS. 1945. 29 x 41. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Earle Ludgin.
- 29 MOUNTAIN LAUREL. 1945. 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20. Lent by Mr. Monroe Wheeler.
- *30 PUDDLE. 1945. 40 x 29. Lent by Mr. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

- *31 TREE. 1945. 40 x 25 $\frac{7}{8}$. Lent by Mr. James Thrall Soby.
- 32 FIERY RINGS. 1946. 26 x 32. Lent by the Edwin Hewitt Gallery.
- 33 GREEN VOTIVE LIGHTS. 1946. 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 32 $\frac{1}{2}$. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert D. Straus.
- 34 CIRCUS. 1947. 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{4}$. Lent by the Walker Art Center.
- *35 EMMITT KELLY. 1947. 40 x 32. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger.
- 36 THE SKYLIGHT. 1948. 40 x 48. Lent by Mr. James Thrall Soby.
- *37 WINDOW SHADE. 1948. 43 x 29. Lent by the Phillips Collection.
- 38 CATHEDRAL. 1949. 63 x 31.
- 39 E. E. CUMMINGS. 1949. Oil and pencil on canvas. 50 x 31.
- *40 THE FRATELLINI. 1949. 70 x 65.
- *41 NAPLES AQUARIUM. 1949. 31 x 63.
- 42 OH STICK. 1949. 34 x 25.
- 43 PARIS. 1949. 42 x 62. Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- *44 VENICE. 1949. 59 x 93. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.
- 45 VENICE. 1949. Gouache. 28 x 42. Lent by Mrs. Gardner Cowles.
- 46 CIRCUS. 1950. 51 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 54.
- *47 DUBLIN AND ENVIRONS. 1950. 48 x 33.
- 48 HYACINTH BULBS. 1950. 19 x 31.
- *49 OIL SPLATTERS AND LEAVES. 1950. 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 56.
- 50 FIRE ESCAPE. 1951. 48 x 33. Lent by the Brooklyn Museum.
- 51 MOSSES. 1951. 24 x 22. Lent by Mr. Philip L. Goodwin.
- 52 "*the streets turn young with rain.*" 1951. 33 x 48. Lent by Mr. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
- 53 WOLF RIVER APPLES. 1951. Oil on fabricated board. 10 x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$. Lent by Mrs. Pierre Matisse.
- 54 BAMBOO. 1952. 48 x 33.
- *55 EARLY. 1952. 33 x 52.
- 56 LIS BAUX. 1952. 48 x 40.
- 57 MIMOSA. 1952. Pastel. 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 41 $\frac{1}{2}$.
- *58 NEW YORK. 1952. 45 x 74.
- *59 TAXI. 1952. 48 x 28.

NOTE: Nos. 1, 4-6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21, 25, 28, 33, 37-39, 42, 43, 46, 51, 52 and 58 are being shown at the Whitney Museum but not at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Des Moines Art Center or the San Francisco Museum of Art.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1909 February 2, born New York City, daughter of Charles Augustus Paul and Julia (MacIver) Newman.
- 1919 Studied at Art Students League, N. Y., Saturday classes, for one year.
Attended public school and two high schools in New York City.
- 1929 Married to Lloyd Frankenberg.
- 1931 Summers, and winter of 1932, at North Truro, Mass.
- 1935 First museum purchase, *Shack* acquired by the Museum of Modern Art (accessioned 1938).
- 1936 Worked on New York WPA Federal Art Project.
- 1939 Winter and part of following year at Key West, Florida.
- 1941 Lighting and decor for four Museum of Modern Art Coffee Concerts.
- 1947 Mural for S.S. *Argentina* of the Moore-McCormack Lines.
- 1948 Four murals for S.S. *Excalibur*, *Exeter*, *Exochorda* and *Excambion* of the American Export Lines. July–October: first trip to Europe, visiting France, Italy, England, Ireland and Scotland.

One-man exhibitions: East River Gallery, N. Y., 1938; Pierre Matisse Gallery, N. Y., 1940; Museum of Modern Art (circulating exhibition), 1941; Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1944; Baltimore Museum of Art, 1945; Pierre Matisse Gallery, 1949; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Portland Art Museum, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum (with I. Rice Pereira), 1950; Vassar College Art Gallery, 1950; Farnsworth Museum, Wellesley College, 1951; Margaret Brown Gallery, Boston, 1951; Phillips Gallery, Washington, D. C., 1951.

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The place of publication of books is New York unless otherwise noted. The place of publication of periodicals has not been noted except for certain little-known American magazines.

Abbreviations: Ag August, Ap April, bibl bibliography, D December, ed edited, F February, il illustration(s), Ja January, Je June, Jl July, mag magazine, Mr March, My May, N November, O October, rev review, S September.

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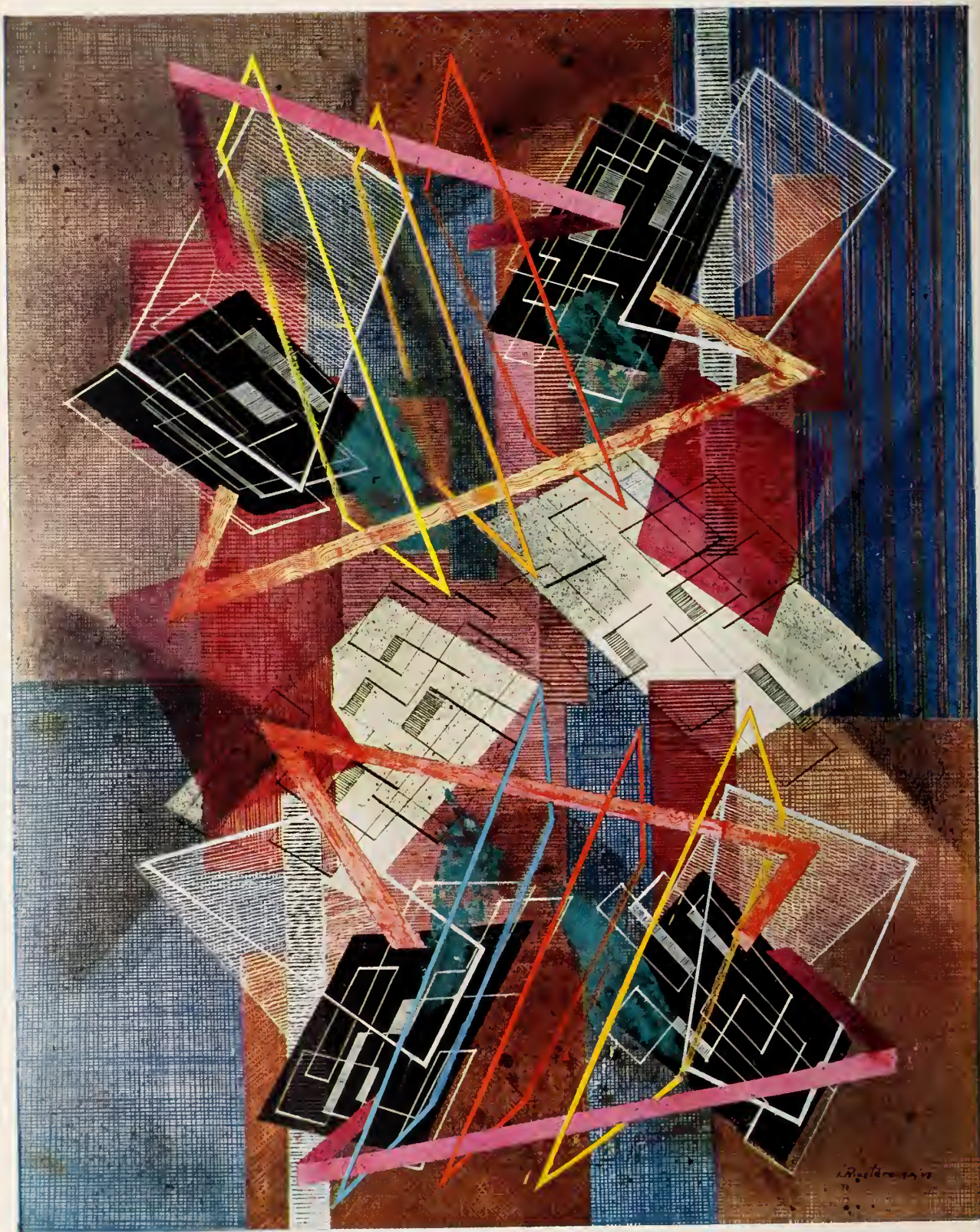
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I. Rice Pereira





OBLIQUE PROGRESSION. 1948. Oil. 50 x 40. Whitney Museum of American Art.

I. Rice Pereira

IRENE RICE PEREIRA is two people unaccountably occupying the same shapely form. One Pereira paints the pictures by which the world knows her; the serenely poised abstractions, cool, geometrical and logically ordered. The other is seized by a kind of creative hysteria; she weeps and sings and draws — violently and with both hands — fantastic birds and men in turbulent confusion. The first Pereira lectures publicly on the relation of abstract art to the new concepts of modern physics and mathematics. The second speaks privately of dreams and visions and writes imaginative poems of fervid imagery. Yet the heart of the paradox is not these contradictions but rather that the two Pereiras become, by some alchemy, a single artistic personality, so that the passion of the one enters into and illuminates what might easily be the rather chilly geometry of the other.

This is more than a figure of speech because Pereira, since early childhood, has had a romantic and mystical feeling for light. The sun is a recurring symbol in her poetry, often as the male principle. Light, in her intricate esthetic theory, is the element that gives human meaning to the vast reaches of the four-dimensional world that she charts in her abstractions. Her novel techniques of glass and parchment painting have sprung from a search for an ever purer light that will emanate from deep in the picture, flooding out with a life-giving force. "Light," she says, "exists in the depth of man's psyche . . . The sun is the reconciling symbol of all life." While she has only recently become fully aware of the emotional and artistic significance that light has for her, Pereira believes that she was always half-conscious of these truths. In her softly urgent voice with its undertone of strong feeling, she recalls a childhood morning in the Berkshires when she was standing in a field watching the reflection of light on dewdrops, as she had often done before. But this time the realization came to her, with the force of a religious revelation, that the rainbows were children of the sun, that the sun itself was God. "I threw myself on the ground," she says, "and cried for hours."

The precocious and emotional child, whose father called her "Gypsy," was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, on August 5, 1907, the daughter of Emanuel and Hilda (Vanderbilt) Rice. Her mother was of mixed American and German ancestry, her father of Polish birth, although he had come to the United States when still a child. Among her relatives were a number of artists, chiefly amateur, and several musicians. When Pereira was about five, her father moved his family and grain



ANCHOR. 1932. Oil. 38 x 48. Collection of the artist.

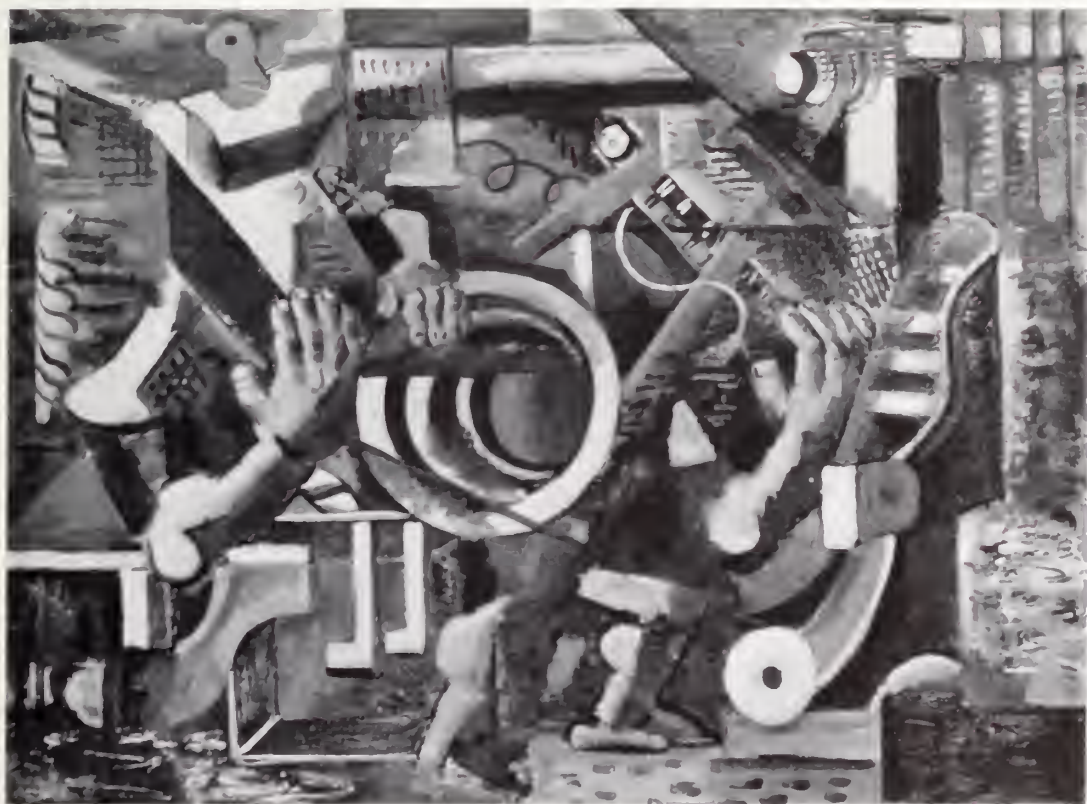
business to Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Slightly later he sold it and bought a bakery in Great Barrington. Some of Pereira's few happy memories are of their big white house on the hill with its fields and horses. But unfortunately her mother was ill a great deal of the time and she was sent on long visits to her grandmother in Boston or to one of her aunts. As she grew older she found herself almost entirely responsible for her two younger sisters and brother.

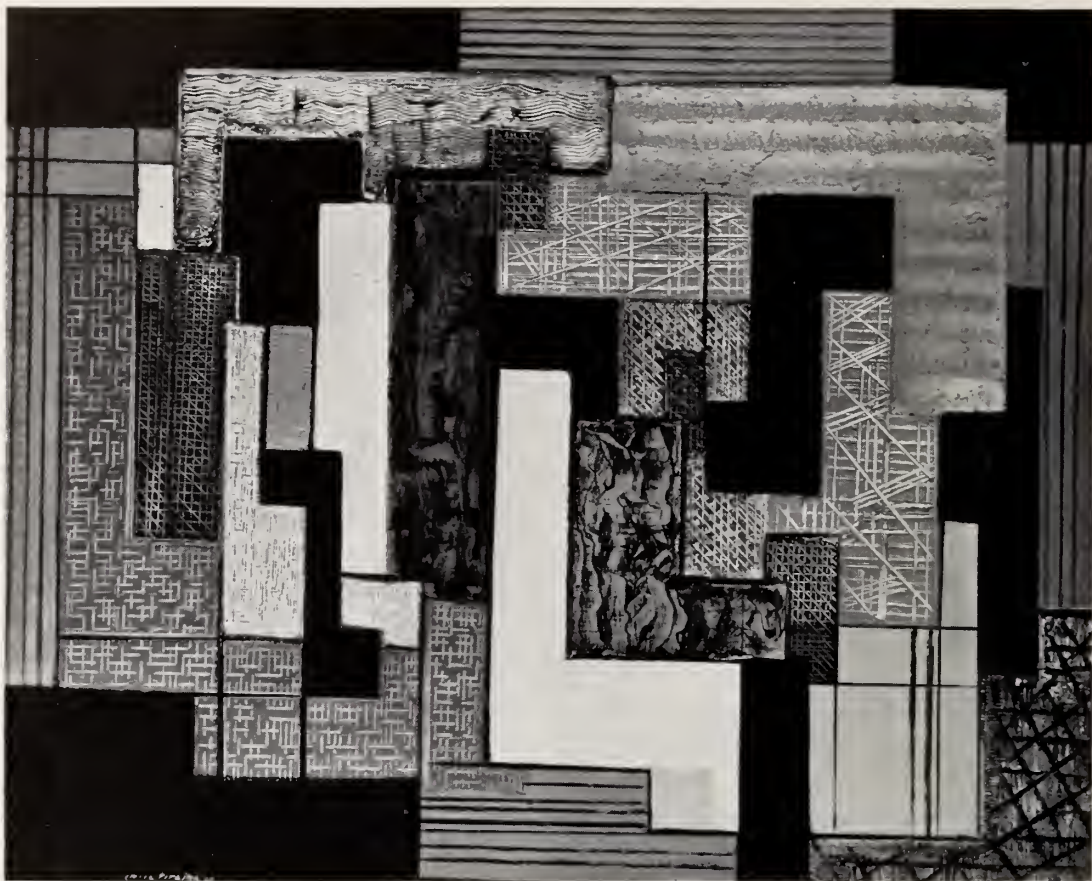
By both temperament and circumstance she was a lonely child, engrossed in reading and determined to be a poet, or at least a writer. At Great Barrington she had the country, which she loved, but when she was seven or eight her father moved them all back to Boston for a year and then to Brooklyn. There Pereira spent hours in the children's section of the public library, consuming Louisa May Alcott, Jane Austen, Dickens and Thackeray. With the connivance of a friendly librarian, she went on to raid the adult section for Balzac, Voltaire and any biography of a great woman she

could lay her hands on. In secret, since she was convinced that her family would not approve, she wrote copiously, starting, among other projects, an ambitious biography of Joan of Arc. She enjoyed public school and the year and a half at Eastern District High School which followed.

When she was fifteen, Pereira's private world collapsed around her. In that year her father died, leaving the family in a desperate financial situation. Switching from the school's academic to its commercial course, she finished three years' work in six months, then condensed a typing and stenography course into three weeks. With her hair up and her first high heels, she landed a job as stenographer in an accountant's office. For the next year she was the family's only support, and while her sister helped thereafter, it was long before she was free from financial responsibility. This was a time of indecision and changing ambitions. For years Pereira had designed clothes (she still does some for herself) and now she entered the Traphagen School but was disappointed with its methods. Night classes in the same subject at Washington Irving High School were no more successful. With her father's death, freeing her from parental opposition to a

MAN AND MACHINE. 1936. Oil. 36 x 48. Durlacher Bros.

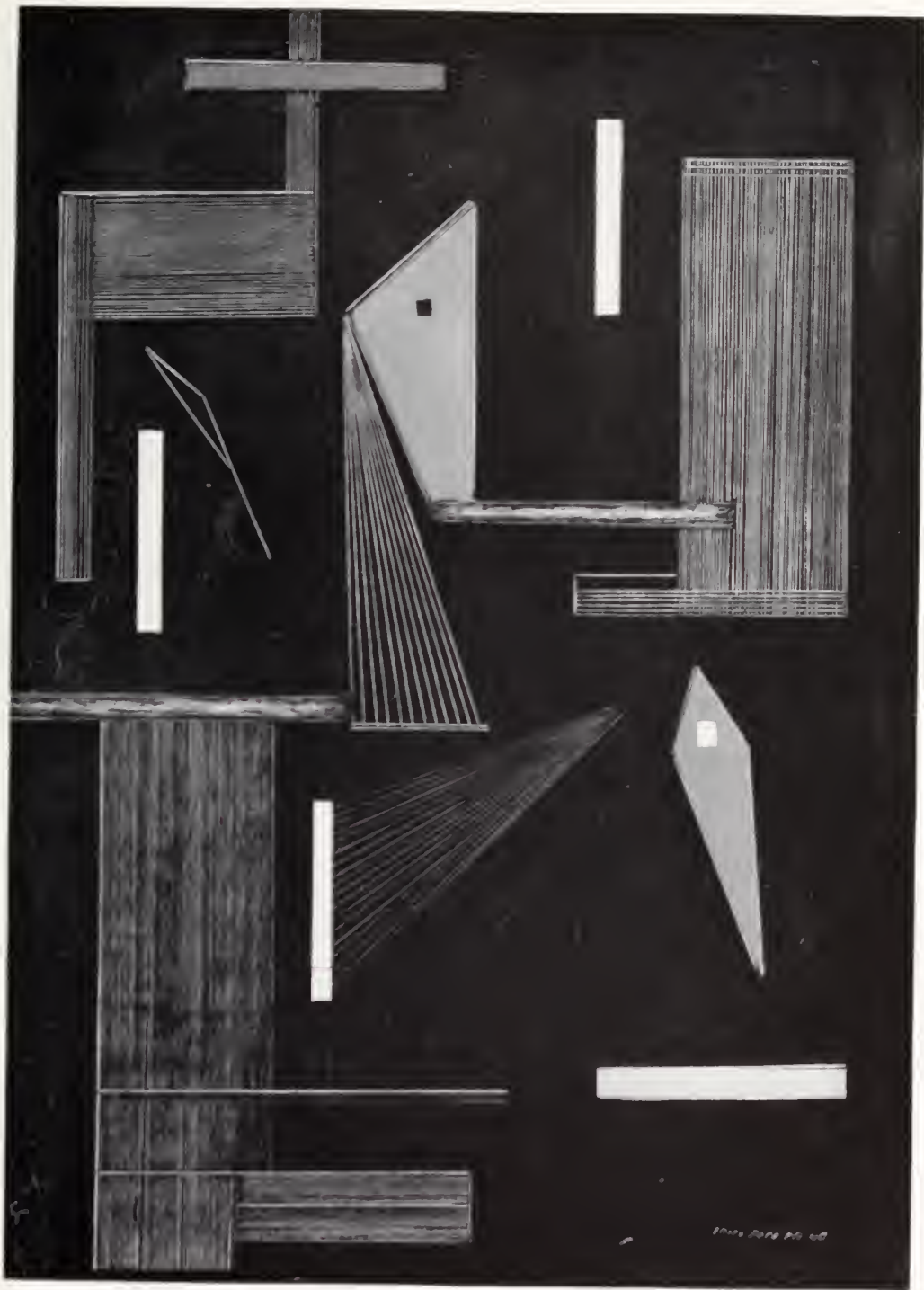




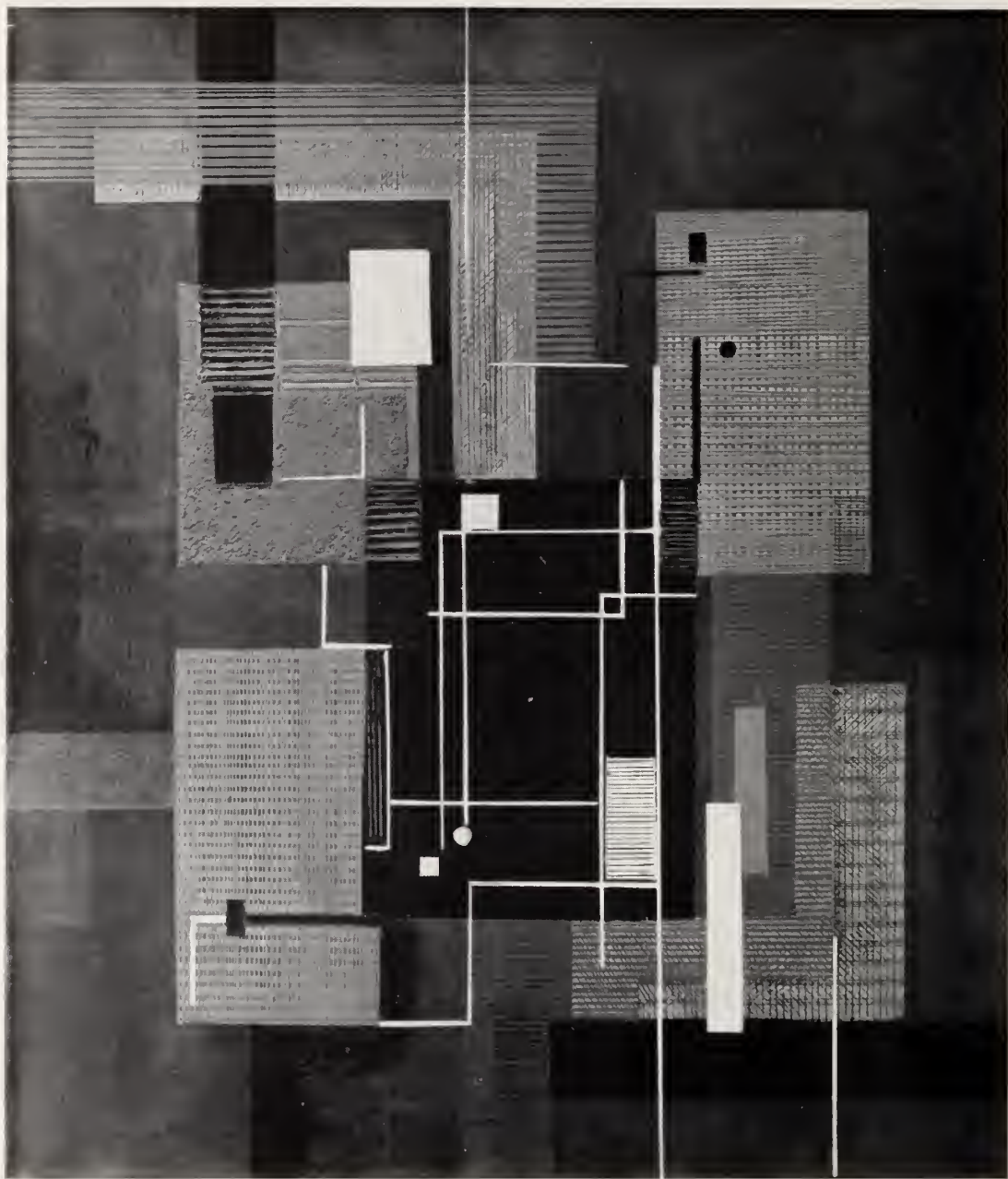
WHITE RECTANGLE NO. 1. 1938. Oil. 24 x 30. Durlacher Bros.

writing career, she had perversely lost her interest in authorship, but for a brief time it revived and she took a number of night courses in literature at New York University. Still dissatisfied, she recalled the advice of one of her teachers to try painting or stage design. Returning to Washington Irving, she entered the evening art classes and a new world opened its portals.

At nineteen Pereira fell in love with art for the first time. Circumstance had long since forced her out of the isolation of her early childhood but she still felt an immense need for a creative outlet and perhaps even more for human sympathy and admiration. Her immediate aptitude provided both. She was happier drawing and painting than she had ever been before and she remembers with gratitude the encouragement of her teachers and the day that some of her fellow students retrieved a few sketches that she had thrown away. In October 1927 she enrolled in night classes at the Art Students League, where her principal teachers were Richard Lahey and Jan Matulka. Today



THE RED AND BLUE. 1940. Oil. 34 x 24. Collection Mr. and Mrs. James S. Rice.



WHITE LINES. 1942. Parchment. 25 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{7}{8}$. Museum of Modern Art, gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

she feels a warm respect for Lahey's tolerance but she thinks Matulka had the greater influence on her. He talked about Picasso and Matisse and let her experiment with cubist abstractions, although most of her time she worked from the model. There was a congenial group in the class, including David Smith, Lucille Corcos, Burgoyne Diller and Edgar Levy. They stayed together for the three years that she studied at the League.

In 1929, at the age of twenty-one, she married Humberto Pereira, a commercial artist of Spanish or Portuguese descent whose avocation was painting very large nudes. When these were unsuccessful (which was apparently often), the canvases were passed on to his wife, who also did a series of large nude figures, later confiscated by a landlord for rent. Marriage did not bring immediate release from financial pressure. Pereira continued to work days as a secretary, now in an insurance office where the duties were light and allowed her to spend a good deal of time reading. Her interest had turned to philosophy, both oriental and occidental. She still has her marked and annotated copies of Kant, Spinoza and Bergson.

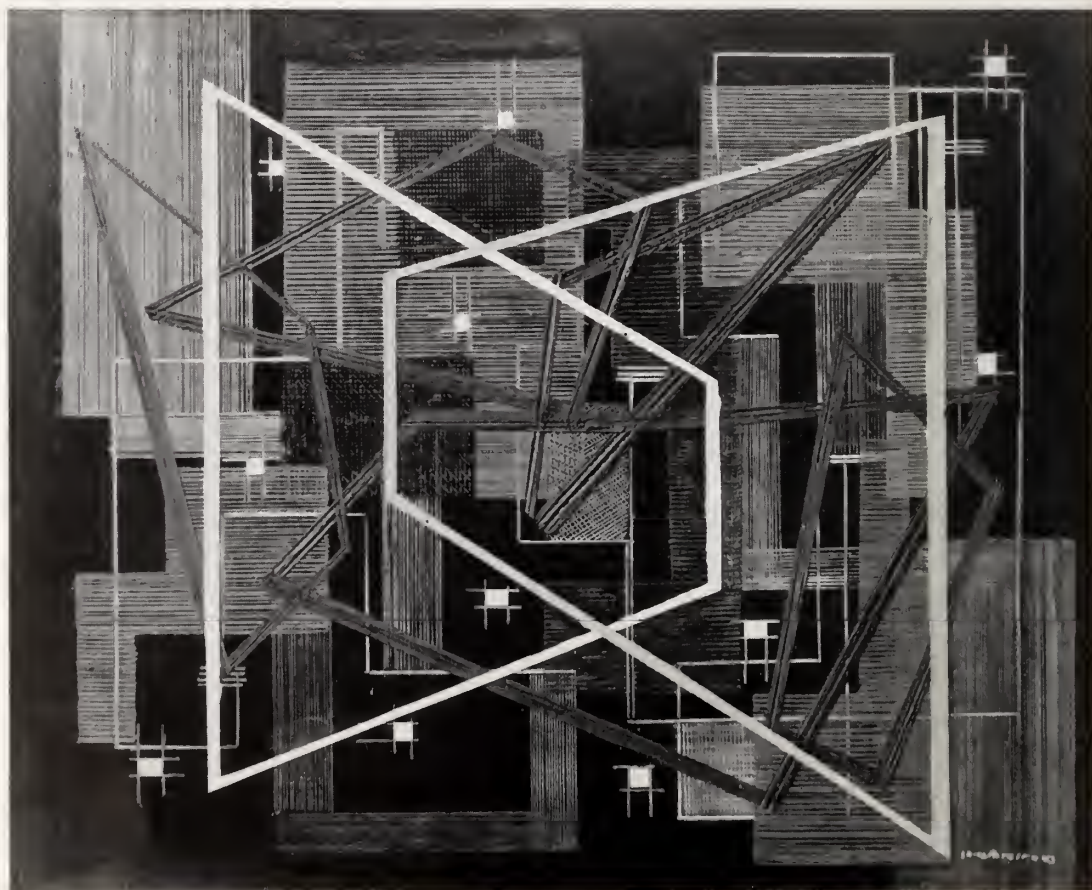
By 1931 she felt she was finished at the League. She had also saved enough money for a trip abroad with her husband, but at the last minute he changed his mind and she went alone, sailing that summer on the *S.S. Pennland*. On the way over she sketched the boat's machine forms, its ventilators, anchors and winches, which were to play an important part in her painting a little later. Pereira's plan was to study for a year in Paris but the French schools did not meet her expectations. For about a month she worked at the Académie Moderne, where Ozenfant was giving criticism in Léger's absence. There she found a conventional insistence on working from the model instead of the excitement of the modern movements, which she had hoped to encounter. Travel seemed more promising, so early in November she packed up and went through Switzerland to Italy, where she visited Venice, Milan, Florence and Rome. Although she was in Italy for less than a month, she recalls her stay vividly because it marked the first time in her life that she was emotionally moved by the great art of the past. Significantly, it was not the later masters, not Raphael or Titian or Rembrandt, who excited her, but the golden panels of the primitives with their clear, bright color and their glowing light.

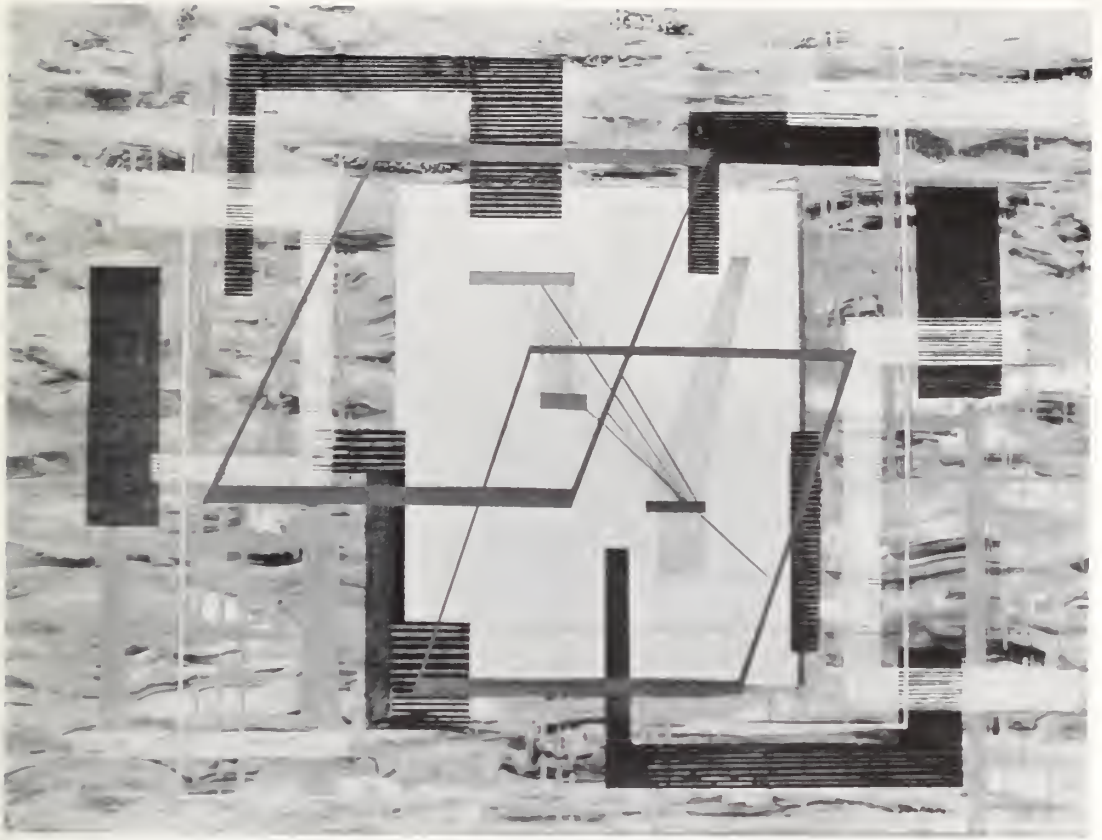
It had been Pereira's romantic intention to push on to the Near East, where names like Bagdad and Damascus beckoned. Instead, she heeded the advice of a clerk in the American Express office at Rome, who told her she was much too young to go alone and sent her to North Africa with the promise that she would not forget the Sahara. She sailed from Palermo on December 8, arriving in Tunis the next day — then on to Constantine and Biskra. At last, with a French couple whom she had met on the boat, she found herself crossing the vast reaches of the desert. Pereira says quite simply, "It was the greatest experience of my life." The immensity, dwarfing man to insignificance, the huge impersonal nothingness moved her to alternate despair and exaltation. Her reaction was entirely beyond her own control, an emotional response of extraordinary intensity. The desert's impression has stayed with her all her life, and while she has

never attempted to paint it, her sense of the mystery of space, so marked in the later abstractions, was quite possibly born at this time.

In January 1932 Pereira returned to New York and now was able to paint full time. At first she felt lost and unsure of her direction; the impact of the desert had been too profoundly disturbing. But that summer, at Provincetown on Cape Cod, she pulled out her old sketches made on the *Pennland* and sensed in them a kind of salvation. On a big canvas with full, heavy strokes she painted *Anchor*. The picture "seemed very necessary to me," she says. "I needed to establish my own balance and feel anchored. With each stroke I felt more and more secure." There followed, over the next few years, a series of large canvases based on boats, wharfs and their paraphernalia. For the most part these were quite realistic, though painted with a bold, vigorous hand, a heavy insistence on mass and sometimes with distortions verging on expressionism. They are remarkably unfeminine pictures for a girl of twenty-five, and it is small wonder that a

TRANSPARENT PLANES. 1943. Oil. 28 x 34. Brandeis University.





RED, YELLOW AND BLUE. 1942. Oil. 30 x 40. Collection Mr. Marvin Small.

critic, reviewing her first one-man exhibition at the A. C. A. Gallery in 1933, referred to their author as Mr. Pereira.

At the same time she was also experimenting with a more abstract approach. Her *Ventilators*, done in 1933, rearranges forms freely and stresses their silhouette rather than their volume. Painted mostly in gray and white with a soft blue background, it emerges as a handsome, sharply-defined pattern quite similar to the style of Immaculates like Sheeler and Demuth in the preceding decade, although Pereira says she was not aware of them at this time. Actually her obsession with boat forms seems to have sprung from the same kind of mysterious emotional needs that produced *Anchor*. She felt compelled, she says, to build her boat from the ground up, to launch it, take it out to sea and return it safe to harbor. Her ships became an obscure, composite symbol – perhaps of the voyage of life itself.

From about 1935 Pereira began to broaden the scope of her interests. She painted a few portraits, including one in 1934 of a man suspended in the sky thinking. But the

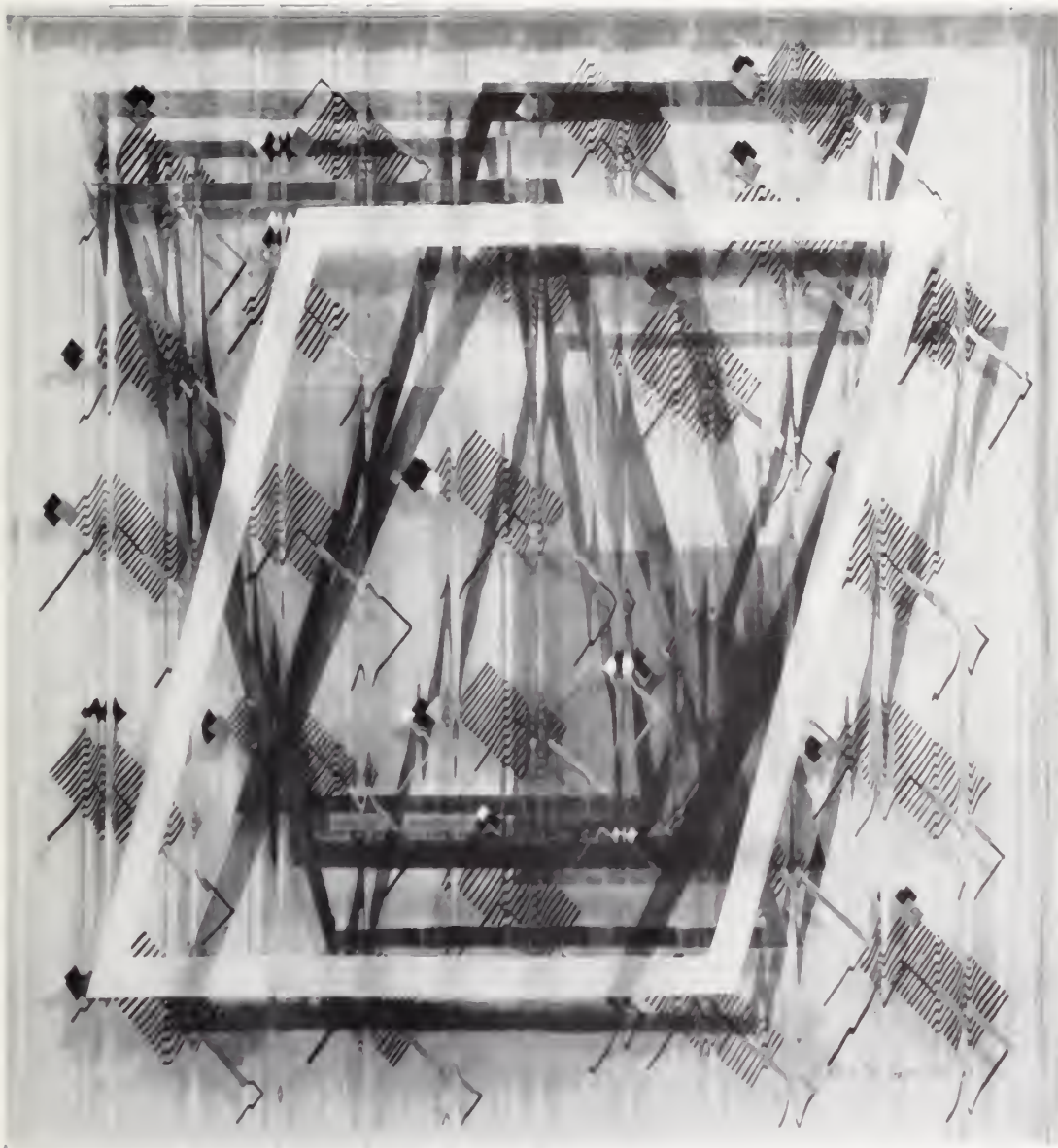
new theme that claimed her principal attention for the next two or three years was the machine. Esthetically this was a logical outgrowth of her boat subjects; philosophically it seems to have stemmed from a different source – a half-conscious desire to examine the place of humanity in the modern world. Once, in 1933, she had painted an isolated picture of a gigantic printing press with the figure of a man dwarfed before it. In 1935 she went back to this, took parts from it and started to reorganize it, partly because she was interested in its geometric shapes and its movement, partly, she thinks, because it frightened her and dismantling it gave her a sense of triumphing over its impersonal power. *Machine Composition* is a kind of wild *ballet mécanique*, a little reminiscent of Léger but more dynamic and a good deal more confused.

The culmination, though not the last, of Pereira's work in this vein was *Man and Machine* of 1936, which she painted in two versions. The first shows a pair of men with huge hands and exaggerated muscles struggling with a semi-abstract arrangement of machine forms, drawn partly from her earlier wharf pictures, partly from imagination. The one at the right looks much like Atlas painfully supporting the world, and the whole painting is uncomfortably strained. As she worked, she became aware of the difficulty of making man equal to the machine and decided to try again. In the second version the men virtually disappeared except for their hands, left, she says, as a sign of defiance. In one sense the machine triumphed; yet in another, man, through the artist, was victorious. The more abstract design, the more disciplined organization of forms in parallel planes and the subdued but rich harmony of earth colors with a few reds and blues combine to rob the machine of its terror by translating it completely into art.

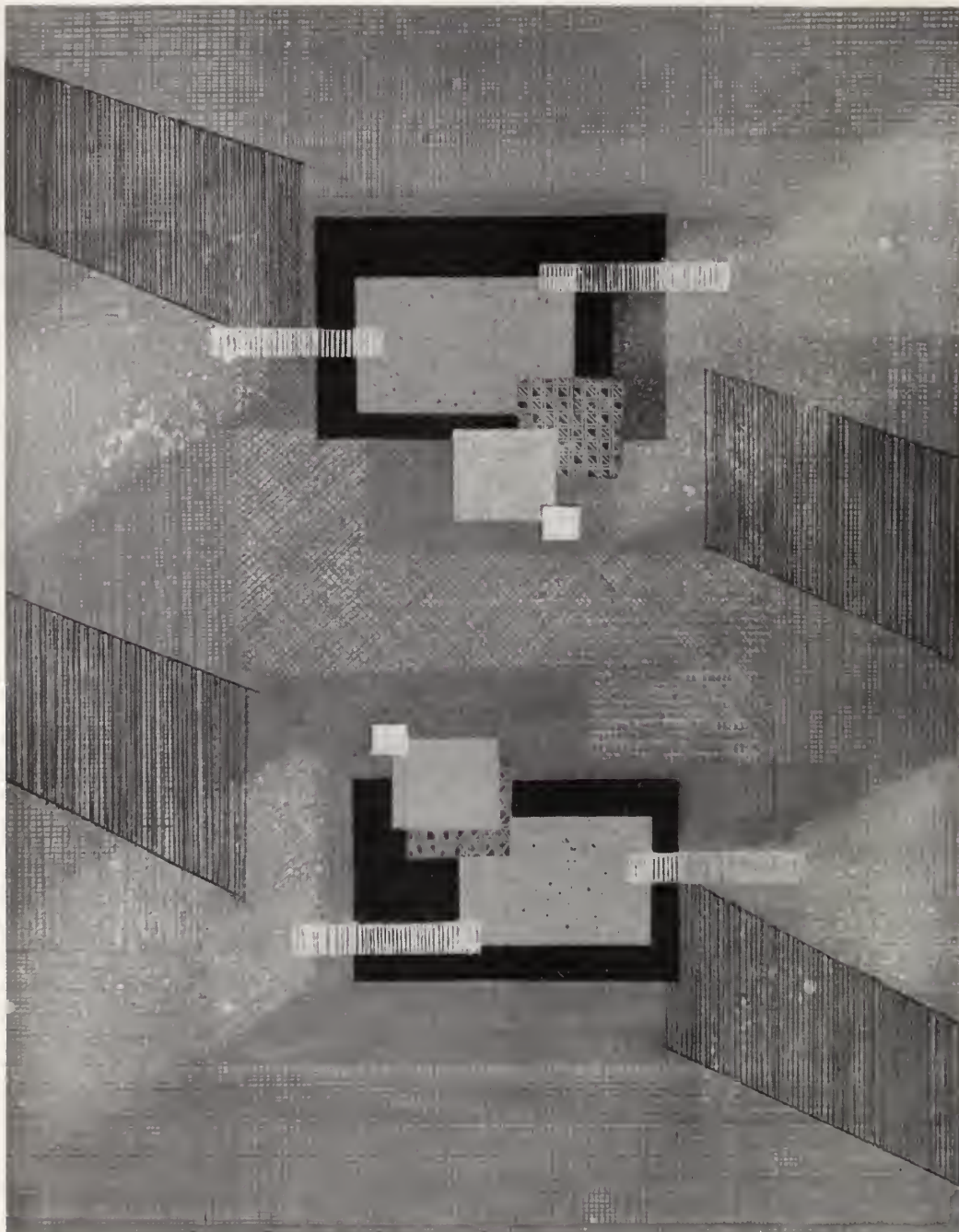
From this point on, Pereira's interest in the machine gradually waned, although she continued until 1938 to paint pictures like *Pendulum*, *Belts and Wheels* and one based on a 16th Street power house. She did not again attempt the esthetic and emotional problem of introducing the human figure and, at the end of this period, she said farewell to her machine forms in a strange pair of canvases called *Monument 1* and *Monument 2*. These combined a Greek temple with elements from *Belts and Wheels*. "I was burying the machine system in classical Greece, its ancient home of pure logic," she explains.

The economic depression of the 1930's coincided with the artist's machine period and quite possibly was one of the motivations for *Man and Machine*. Like many other painters, Pereira was personally affected and deeply moved by the want and suffering of those years. On several occasions she attempted pictures with a specific social message, the most ambitious being a large canvas of artists manacled beneath an oppressor's foot with a crucifix and a blazing sun behind. It was born of intense feelings, full of massive expressionist distortions, but today it looks curiously dated and rhetorical. The truth is that Pereira has seldom been at her best with the human figure, except in her late fantastic drawings.

Indirectly the depression helped the artist find her own direction. Late in 1935 the WPA's Federal Art Project founded a Design Laboratory to provide training in all



TRANSVERSE PARALLELS. 1946. Glass. 24 x 22. Durlacher Bros.



TWO UP. 1946. Oil. 34 x 42. Durlacher Bros.

branches of industrial art. Pereira was one of the founders, collaborated in planning the courses and was a member of the teaching staff from the opening of classes in January 1936 until the WPA was forced to abandon the school over a year later. She then transferred to the Project's easel division until 1939. At the same time she continued to teach at the Design Laboratory when it was taken over, in September 1937, by the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, a CIO affiliate. And she remained on the faculty, though unpaid, until October 1939, when she resigned. At the Design Laboratory Pereira taught painting, composition and design synthesis. Many of the school's methods were borrowed from the German Bauhaus. Work was to be "purely experimental and unhampered," and one objective was to stimulate an awareness "of the practical relationship between fine arts and all phases of design." In this atmosphere she became absorbed in textural studies which were soon to find a direct reflection in her work.

In 1937 Pereira painted her first pure abstractions, several of which were exhibited in a group show at the East River Gallery in November. This was a period of transition. Some of the new pictures still preserved vestiges of her machine forms, though scarcely recognizable. Others were purely geometrical but rather coarsely and heavily painted, like much of her preceding work. A few, such as the watercolor *Red Forms* and the oil *Rectangle* of 1938, forecast the delicate precision and stricter geometry of her mature style. But the most prominent characteristic of the 1937-38 abstractions was the varied texture, seen well in *White Rectangle No. 1*, and achieved by many means such as patterning, scraping, incising and palette knife work. At first this seems to have sprung solely from a desire for variety and surface enrichment, probably influenced by her experiments at the Design Laboratory. Pereira says she soon realized, however, that her textures were actually creating light vibration of changing speed and intensity; that pigment, freed from representational tasks, could produce pure luminosity. The discovery was a turning point in her career, the start of a search which has preoccupied her at intervals for fifteen years.

Part of that search has been technical, for Pereira's restless and inquiring nature has never been content to limit itself solely to traditional painting with oil on canvas. One of her first experiments, in 1938, was a series of mobile collages incorporating poetry by David Sortor; a typical one consisted of a wheel bearing a poem and turned by a crank which protruded through a hole in the glass. More fruitful research was carried out in a new technical laboratory for artists which had just been established by the Federal Art Project. There Jack Kufeld helped her as she tried briefly the use of magnesite on panels. He also introduced her to the glyptal resin which she still uses both as a varnish and, in emulsion, as a painting medium. In 1939 she went on, independently, to do her first paintings on glass and, two years later, on parchment.

In spite of personal difficulties — she was divorced in 1938 — Pereira recalls these years with a good deal of happiness. The Federal Art Project brought her not only

security but a sense of comradeship with other artists and an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss mutual problems. Always a person of high enthusiasm and immense energy, she threw herself into a number of activities aimed at bettering the artist's lot. For a time she was chairman of the easel division of the United American Artists and she was more or less active in other art unions which followed, such as the American Artists' Congress and the Artists' League of America. But Pereira's greatest energies have always been directed towards her work, and the decade of the '40's saw her rapid growth into a mature artist. The boat and machine forms, the portraits, the social subjects were now resolutely discarded as she drove with an almost fanatical concentration, working at times eighteen hours a day, toward the perfection of her abstract style.

From the beginning she established her limits and has abided by them with remarkable consistency. Her abstractions are geometrical and, more than that, severely rectilinear. They include no fluid or amorphous forms, except in the background of some late pictures; even the circle, the arc and the sinuous curve are absent. Pereira builds her pictures with a remarkably small number of shapes. The principal ones are the square with its variants (rectangle, trapezoid, parallelogram, etc.) and lines or bands in grid and maze-like patterns. To these she often adds a figure consisting of thin lines radiating from a single point and ending in a transverse bar, a figure which she devised as early as 1940 in *The Red and the Blue* and which reappears at intervals down to the present day (e.g. *Shooting Stars*). If one adds her various textural treatments, such as spatter work, surfaces modeled in relief, incised, marked by netting pressed into wet paint or smoothed by the palette knife, one has catalogued very nearly her whole formal vocabulary, though without any hint of the extraordinary variety which she achieves through her limited means.

Pereira's choice of these severe forms is deliberate and springs, partly at least, from an intricate esthetic theory which she had been formulating since early in the 1930's. At that time she read and re-read C. Howard Hinton's *The Fourth Dimension*. Her imagination was deeply stirred by the new concepts of matter, energy and space, and she began to feel that abstract art of a certain kind could express these realities in a way that traditional art, with its insistence on the object and its limited world of Renaissance perspective, could never do. Speaking in 1940 at a symposium arranged by United American Artists, she analyzed abstraction as being of three different kinds. The first was "representational," meaning that it broke down objects in nature to obtain their essence. The second was "intuitional," or shapes drawn from the subconscious. The third, obviously her own kind, was "the pure scientific or geometric system of esthetics," which, she said, seeks "to find plastic equivalents for the revolutionary discoveries in mathematics, physics, biochemistry and radioactivity."

Just how this can be done in practice — what specific pictorial forms can be equivalent to what specific scientific facts — Pereira has never attempted to say. Indeed it is perhaps an impossible question. "The difference between scientific research and the experiments



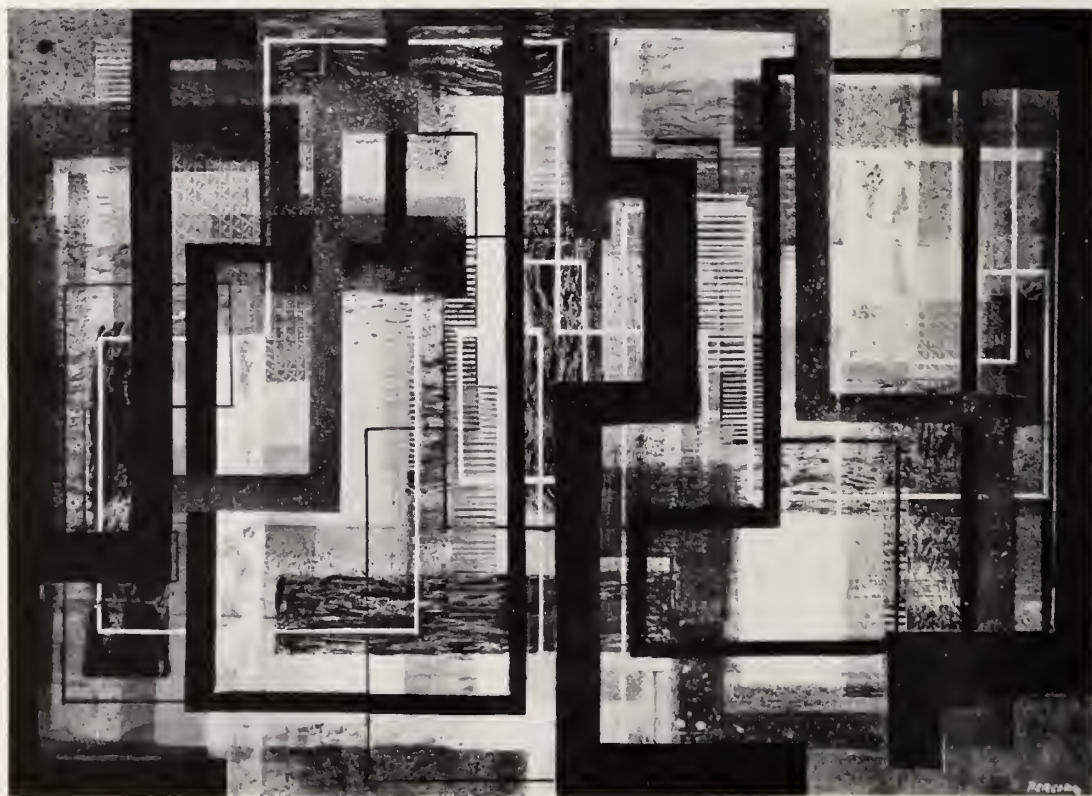
AFFLUENT SURFACE. 1948. Parchment. 30 x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$. Durlacher Bros.

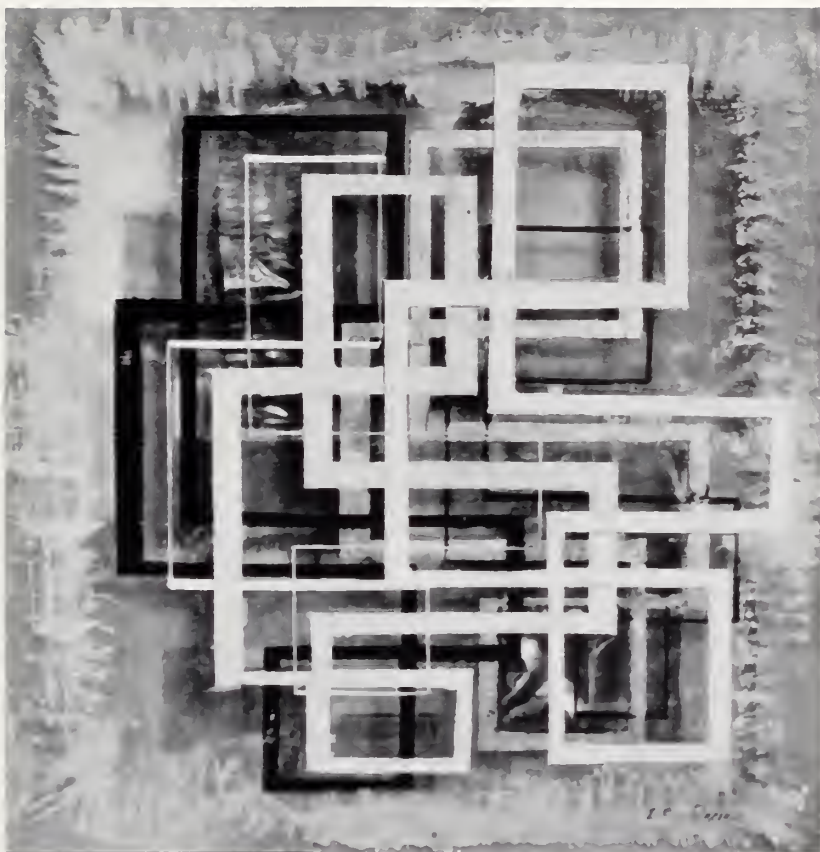
of the artist," she explained in the same lecture, "is that the artist . . . in most cases must approach his problem in an empirical way." In her own case, the discoveries of physics seem to have affected her emotionally — much as the African desert did before — with a breathtaking vastness, an excited sense of having stepped into a new world. As an artist she is perhaps more concerned with the embodiment of that emotion than with creating real equivalents of scientific theories.

Throughout her mature career Pereira has pursued two major objectives — form and light. At first the formal search seems to have been, by a narrow margin, the more important. It has led her through a number of stylistic changes, which do not follow a consistent line of development but are rather experiments in different directions. From each of these she has learned lessons and gained new qualities which enrich her subsequent work in a kind of cumulative process.

From 1940 to 1942 Pereira's painting was flatly two-dimensional and of extreme simplicity. *White Lines* and *Composition in White* are characteristic. They are made up almost entirely of rectangles with no diagonals and no receding shapes. The textures are subtly related, discreet, much less insistent than in her first abstract work. The

BRIGHT BEYOND. 1950. Oil. 30 x 40. Durlacher Bros.





COPPER LIGHT, 1951. Parchment, 18 x 17. Durlacher Bros.

dominant quality is a delicate precision, a poised serenity, a sense of inevitability. The absolute rightness in the relation of the parts suggests, perhaps, the mathematical beauty of certain natural forms such as enlarged crystals or the structure of an atom, though without at all resembling either. To this extent her paintings of the period might be taken as generalized symbols of the microscopic world but, like all the artist's work, they do not insist on such an interpretation.

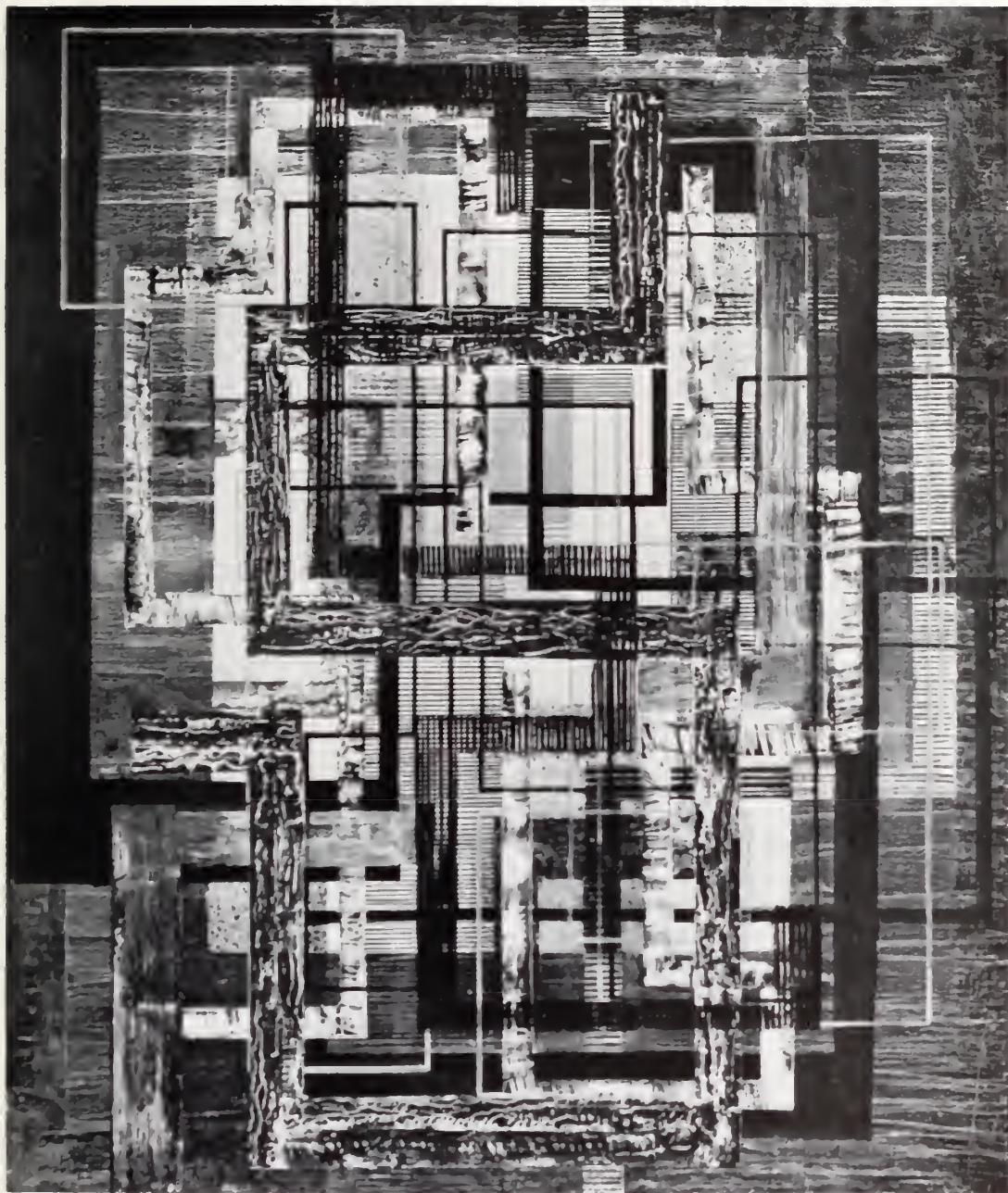
At intervals throughout her career Pereira has returned to the flat, rectangular style of these years, but from 1943 on she has generally sought a deeper space and a more complex design. One of the first instances of her new approach is *Black Control*. Here the eye is led from the two big trapezoids in the foreground back through a maze of overlapping forms to the bare white canvas in the center, which, for the artist, is always "the plane of infinity." The spatter work and the semi-transparency of some of the bands create an impression of forms floating, miraculously suspended and freed from gravity, an effect which recurs often hereafter.

Indeed Pereira's use of space is one of the most important elements in her mature work and one of the hardest to define. This is because her space is generally ambiguous, so that one can scarcely say whether it is deep or shallow, extensive or restricted. Take, for instance, her maze-like lines and bands of different colors in *Blue Predominates* or indeed in any of a dozen other pictures. Each band is a separate entity and exists on a separate plane. One is on top, the next is behind it, a third is obviously behind the other two and so forth. Yet the distance that separates them is seldom clear; it could be minute or it could be great. This is equally true of the paintings done on several layers of transparent glass; while the distance between the planes can actually be measured, the receding or advancing colors and the changing relations in design, which occur when the spectator moves, create fluctuating effects of depth that vary greatly in the same picture.

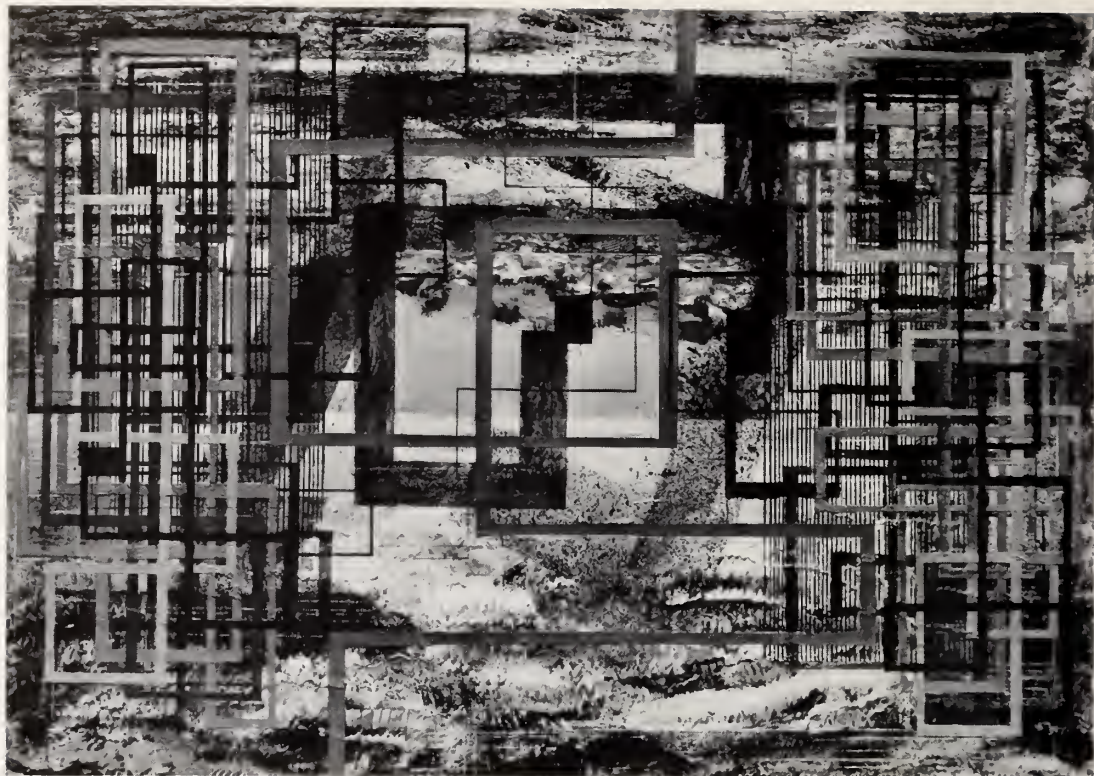
Similarly, the trapezoids in a canvas like *Transparent Planes* can be read in two ways. Either they are actual trapezoids lying parallel with the picture plane or they are rectangles seen in diminishing perspective and hence penetrating deeply into space. More rarely, as in *Eight Oblongs* and *Affluent Surface*, the artist suggests an aerial view, as of looking down from a great height. But again whether the geometrical forms are far or near depends on individual interpretation. In all these pictures, and in many others, the spatial relations can change abruptly before one's eyes, much as a hidden image appears for a moment from a hill and then is lost again. The ambiguity gives Pereira's space a mysterious and a dynamic quality, perhaps akin to the space-time continuum of physics, but more important for the purely esthetic reason that it imparts romantic tension to her otherwise concrete images.

In 1946-47 the artist returned briefly to the flatter designs of her earlier work, as in *Two Up*, *Yellow Square* and, to a lesser degree, *Projecting Planes*. There is, however, a considerable difference. The later pictures are more complex in structure and above all they are much more heavily textured. Pereira was doing a number of glass paintings at this time and it seems likely that her concern with light accounts for the unusually vibrant surface of the oils, as well as for the fact that her researches in space and form were temporarily in abeyance.

Then, in one of her characteristic swings, she spent the next three years, from 1948 through 1950, strengthening her fluid space and creating some of the most complex forms that she has ever devised. The new trend is first apparent in *Oblique Progression*, which still preserves the elaborate textures of the preceding work, here covering the background and blocking off any implication of great depth. But against this vibrating surface Pereira has twisted her rectangles in every conceivable position except a flat one and has drawn them with a kind of isometric perspective that makes them project forcibly out of the picture plane towards the spectator. Going farther in *Bright Depth* and *Deep Vision*, she poised still more intricate structures in a still more mysterious space. An incredible virtuosity holds these complex forms together by the sheer force of their geometrical relationship — a force that sometimes seems as powerful and as baffling as the electrical



EVAPORATING NIGHT. 1951. Oil. 36 x 30. Durlacher Bros.



MELTING HORIZON. 1951. Oil. 35 x 50. Durlacher Bros.

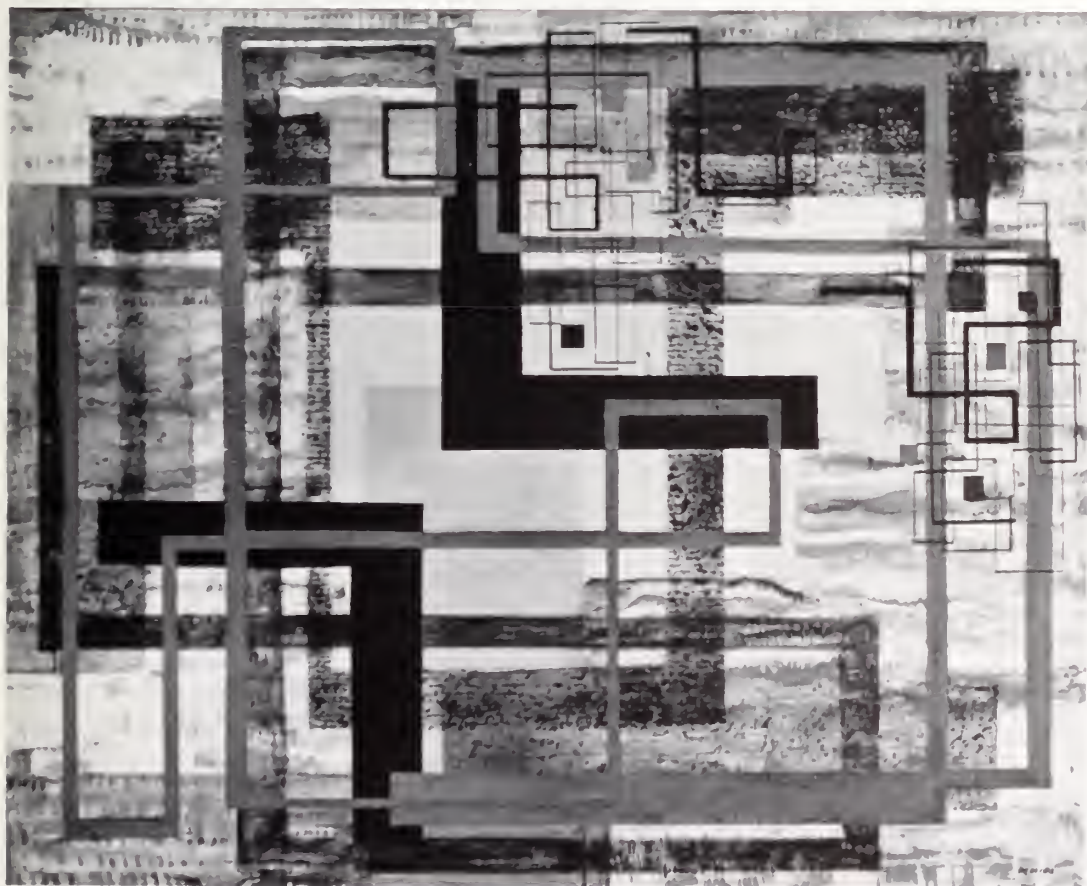
charges that unite the parts of an atom. The effect is perhaps best described by words which Pereira applied to another artist's work, "which compels one to see everything simultaneously from all sides: above, below, inside and outside, piercing through: the sensation of soaring . . ."

In her own case this buoyant, soaring quality is achieved not only by her handling of space but perhaps even more by the light which floods her paintings and seems to lift them out of a shadowed world into a high, bright atmosphere. Throughout the 1940's she had periodically subordinated formal research to the study of luminosity, feeling intuitively that it was a necessary part of her work, although as yet it had no conscious place in her esthetic theory. Her first glass paintings, done in 1939, were inspired by a desire to incorporate actual light in the picture. These early experiments were relatively simple. *Reflection* of 1943 consists only of an opaque panel bearing the principal design and, suspended over it, a single sheet of ordinary glass on which other design elements are done largely in burnished gold leaf. The play of light and shadow between the two planes and the reflections from the gold create a warm radiance, though still a rather subdued one. A similar quality invests the work which she did on translucent parchment

starting in 1941. By stretching the skins tightly over reflecting panels and treating them with glazes or abrasives to alter the degree of transparency, she achieved softly glowing surfaces on which her forms float with a kind of airy lightness.

By 1946, a year in which Pereira seems to have concentrated on light research, she had carried her effects to a much greater brilliance. Using two and three sheets of painted glass, some heavily corrugated, she played with broken and refracted rays, with bright reflections which change as the spectator moves or as the illumination is altered. Glass paintings, like *Transfluent Lines* and *Transverse Parallels* have the glitter of diamonds, even the colors shifting as one turns them. The latter effect was carried still further in her *Polarized Painting* of the same year. Illuminated by a light inside the frame, shapes of transparent celluloid sandwiched between sheets of polaroid glass take on a variety of rainbow hues when seen from different angles. In this case the artist was not entirely pleased with the rather hard, mechanical lighting and has attempted no further experiments with polarization.

SEVEN RED SQUARES. 1951. Oil. 40 x 50. Durlacher Bros.





THE RIDDLE. 1952. Gouache. 21 1/8 x 27 1/8. Durlacher Bros.

During the late 1940's Pereira not only continued her work on parchment and glass but also made a conscious effort to give light a more decisive role in her oils. *Bright Depth* and *Bright Beyond*, as their titles imply, are illuminated by a radiance that adds both an actual and an emotional warmth to her complex formal designs. Light becomes an important element in the romantic feeling which begins to emerge so clearly in her work of the period.

This romantic quality can be detected in several other factors. Color, for instance, has definite associations for her, even when used in completely abstract pictures. "Yellow is east to me" she says; blue is sky; green is earth. But her method of painting is perhaps the most extraordinary instance of her intuitive and emotional approach. Even her most complicated designs are never plotted in advance, although she may have a general idea of the movement and effect she wants. Primarily, however, each picture builds itself in accordance with an inner rhythm which she feels so strongly that it takes complete control of her. Sometimes it flows through her with a quiet strength and she will work on twenty or more paintings in the same day, sure that for each it is giving her the right solution. At other times its operation is more turbulent and she will cry, dance and beat out the



SOMEWHERE TODAY. 1952. Ink and gouache. 17¼ x 23⅛. Durlacher Bros.

rhythm with her hands before she can resolve conflicting forces. On the rare occasions that it deserts her she is physically ill and suffers a kind of partial paralysis.

Pereira's own life during the 1940's was marked with equally fluctuating fortunes. Her sister's death and an unhappy second marriage lasting from 1942 to 1950 clouded many of these years. On the other hand her reputation grew steadily and increasing sales were an encouragement. Private collectors, like Mrs. Marjorie Falk, had bought her work as early as 1939 but her first good year was 1944 when two museums, the Newark and Metropolitan, purchased important pictures. Thereafter sales were more frequent and she also received a few commercial assignments, including the design of a rug and a scarf. The Miller Company bought one of her glass paintings as an example of good design for its lighting engineers.

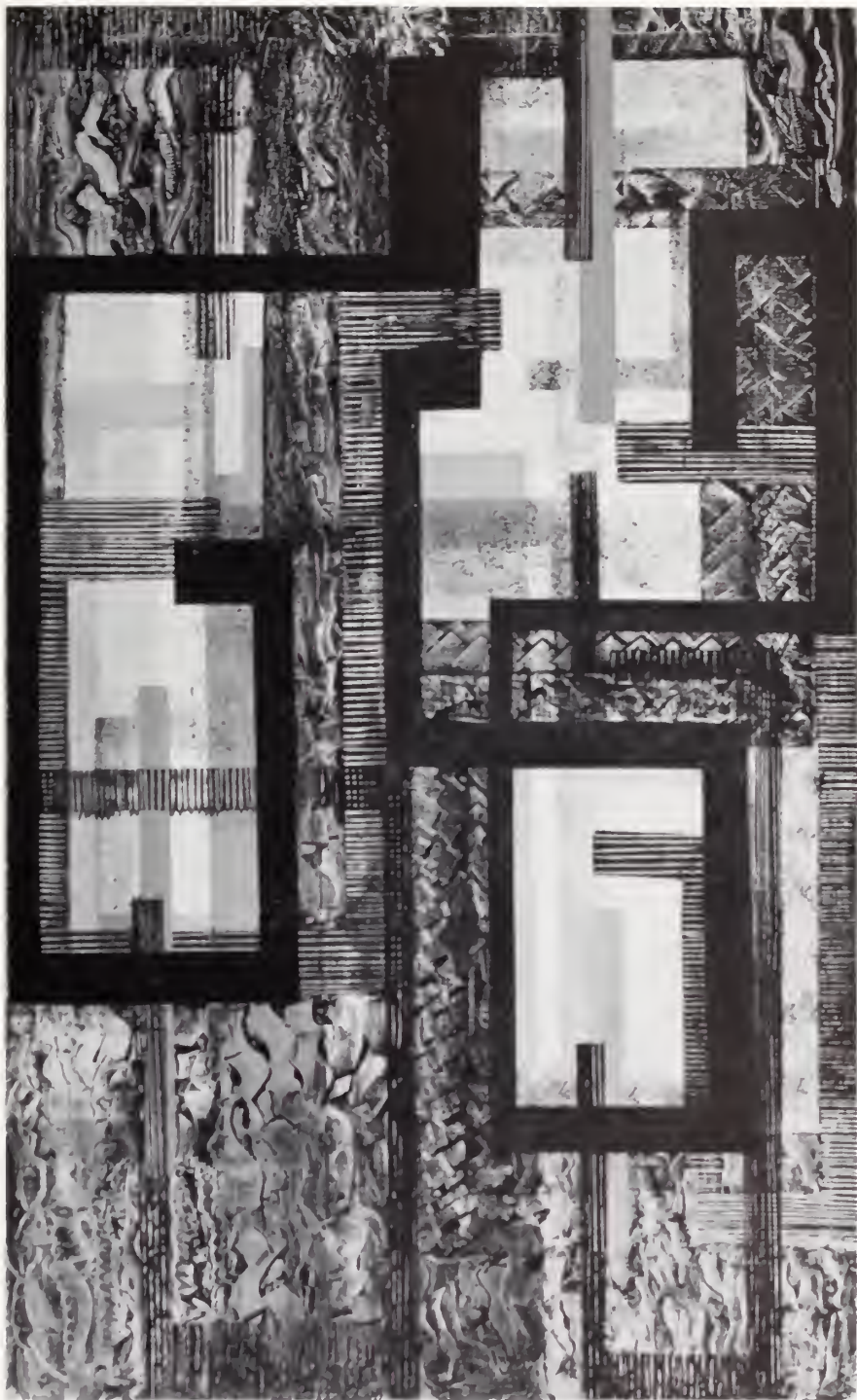
In 1949 Pereira made a brief trip to France, staying a little over two months. With her she took one of her glass paintings which the French artists found curious and admirable. She did no work herself but visited many studios and galleries and came back to the United States in December convinced that the most vital and significant modern painting was being done in her native land.

Just before her trip to France Pereira had met the Irish poet George Reavey. In June 1950 she went abroad again to join him in London, where they were married on September 9. At the end of the month they moved to Salford, a suburb of Manchester, where Reavey had been appointed lecturer at the University. There they stayed until May 9 of the following year, when she returned to the United States, her husband following her in the fall.

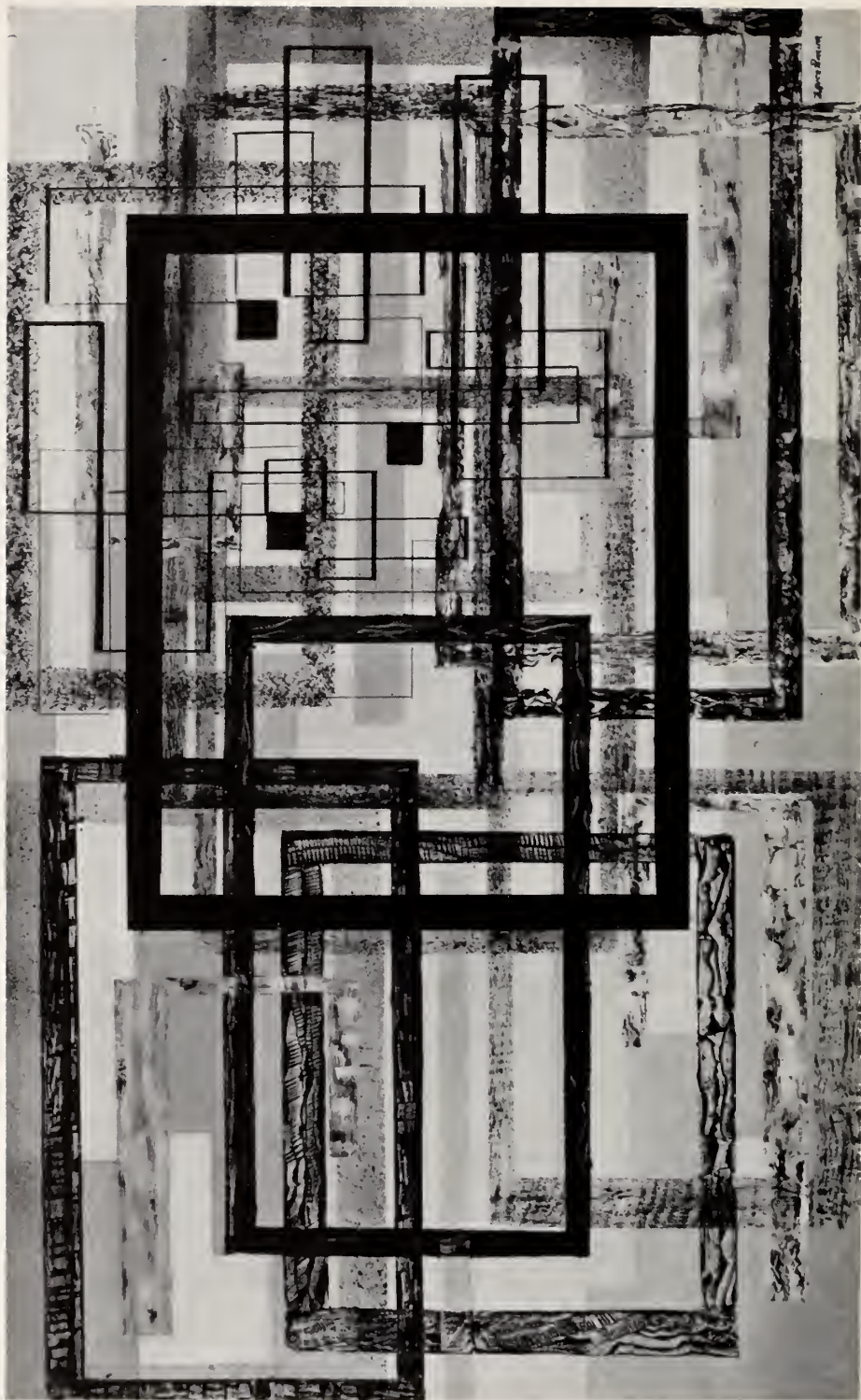
Her eight months in Manchester were an emotional ordeal to the artist. The sun never penetrated the soot-laden atmosphere and a cold rain fell perpetually. Their house was chilly and damp; her canvases seeped moisture and the acid fumes in the air attacked their surfaces. With the strict food rationing they seldom had enough to eat. A "flu" epidemic ravaged the city and long lines queued up in the streets, still dark at nine in the morning, waiting for medicines and even for death certificates. "Every Sunday I wanted to commit suicide," Pereira says. Yet Manchester had one supremely important effect on the artist's work. Plunged in the gloom of the English industrial city she began to realize fully and consciously what light meant to her. In several pictures done or started there, such as *Melting Horizon* and *Evaporating Night*, she painfully recorded the battle between day and night. The vista of bright and fluid colors glimpsed through the heavy bars of the former was, to her, "a gate opening on to space, to sky and whatever is beyond sky." Even after she left England she went back to the same theme in *Transforming Night*, a massively black canvas with one brilliant yellow square shining like a window in the darkness.

On October 14, 1951, with Manchester safely behind her, all Pereira's feelings about light crystallized in one of those sudden revelations that have come to her at times ever since she stood in a field at Great Barrington watching the sun on the dew. In the notebook that she keeps ready for such moments she hurriedly wrote ten paragraphs summarizing her whole conscious theory of light, which was now integrated with her theories of form and space. Her argument is not always easy to follow, perhaps because it springs in part from a more intuitive than logical reasoning. In essence, however, she holds that the sun, or light, is the symbol of life, just as her geometrical forms are symbols of the structure of the universe. In the numbing vastness of interstellar space, only the sun speaks to man of regeneration. Light is the reassuring, the humanizing element that prevents man's perceptions from being frozen by their extension towards infinity. It is a universally felt symbol existing deep in man's psyche. Applying the theory to painting, she believes that light must be taken back to its source in the sun. Therefore it should come from the depth of the picture and beyond in order to establish a continuity between sun and earth-bound spectator. It should flow unchecked, saturating the entire painting. To depict light as broken by solids is, Pereira feels, an academic misconception that captures only the effect and not the all-powerful, fluid, continuous reality of light.

Her thesis is a good deal more complex than this summary suggests, but there can be no doubt that the paintings of the last year and a half glow with an ample radiance



INSIDE — OUTSIDE. 1952. Oil. 50 x 30. Durlacher Bras.



SPRING, TWELVE O'CLOCK, 1952. Oil. 30 x 50. Durlacher Bros.

noticeably greater than that of her earlier work. The emphasis on light of varied character is apparent in many titles: *Sunrise, Sunset, Incandescent, Day Break Light*. The parchment of her recent *Copper Light* is stretched over a crumpled sheet of the metal which reflects its warm rays through the almost transparent skin. The new glass painting *Shooting Stars* utilizes microscopic glass beads to make the stars shine. In *Cathedral Lighted Sky* corrugated aluminum, gold and silver leaf are covered by a pebbly glass that sparkles like tinsel. In short there is scarcely a recent picture in which light does not play a more important part than before.

Several other factors contribute to the flowering of Pereira's work in the 1950's. One of these is an increased romanticism which has crept into the abstractions, warming them with a glow of poetic emotion. Again Manchester seems to have been a turning point. It was there, on a dreary October day, that Pereira was seized by one of those strange creative frenzies that have visited her before, though seldom so violently. For a week she drew continuously, using both hands in her urgency, singing, crying, dancing as she worked. The images that filled her big sketch pad were partly fantastic birds and foliage but chiefly a male figure crowned with a cross, its navel emblazoned with a strange hour-glass shape surrounding cryptic symbols.

These are almost automatic drawings; Pereira herself is quite baffled by their iconography. But at other times she has consciously relaxed from the demanding discipline of her abstractions by doing similar drawings and watercolors like *Somewhere Today* or *The Riddle*. In the latter there is even a kind of story of lovers risen from the sea, while the sweeping fluid design is far from accidental, although the exact antithesis of her geometrical style. She has also applied this fluid manner and prolific imagery to a few glass paintings, including a group done in 1949 and the more recent *You*, related to her poem of that title and filled with the same turbulent emotion:

Do you feel a rose of molten stars
Your house is now a sunbeam
A giant ray of heat
Bringing you eternally
Waves of gems in sapphire sheafs.

Some of this romantic feeling, though more disciplined, enters into the late oils. Now the textures become freer and more fluid, particularly in the background planes where they often escape from their geometrical bounds and drift like colored curtains across the canvas. In *Melting Horizon* they undulate and blend in wavy lines. In *Inside-Outside* the repeated S-curves of the palette knife strokes mount through the picture like flames. In *Transforming Gold* wet paint flows from its bands into surrounding areas, almost as if by accident.

For Pereira there is also a romantic symbolism in many of the late abstractions. *Seven Red Squares* grew from a dream of earth and sky becoming one. In it she says that she made her first attempt to assign a definite position in space to the spectator. The

green square in the center is earth, man's point of reference, from which infinity spreads in all directions. Blending blues and greens symbolize the fusion of earth and sky. A more personal emotion informs *Red to Rose*. Red, to the artist, means intensity of feeling among other things; the four rosy squares shining brilliantly in the upper right are mounted on a wide pink square which represents their spreading glow. The glass picture *Shooting Stars* came from the ardent lines:

Radiance of Shooting stars
Find the way for us
To live eternally,
Eternity becomes a home
For a love of flames of Rose,
Flames of Rose now burn for us
To heat the fires of eternal love.

Several of the big recent canvases are less generalized, at least in intention, than her earlier abstractions. They deal with specific time and place. *Inside-Outside* is obscurely related to her poem beginning, "The time is now;/The place is here." *Spring, Twelve O'Clock* is the essence of a particular moment. Painted in pale apple greens, the bright yellow horizontals are sunlight, the blurred gray bands are wind. The beautifully open and light composition, the gay horizontal movement, the sense of depth and floating are a poetic tribute to a time and a season.

Paradoxically, as the romantic content of her late oils has increased, the geometry has become stricter. Over the more freely painted backgrounds Pereira now arranges her forms in flat, severely rectilinear patterns, much as she did in the early 1940's. No longer are there diagonals, trapezoids or rectangles turned in receding perspective. No longer does one form intersect another in depth. Space grows solely from color and texture and from those magical relationships which the artist now handles with such extraordinary skill.

In short there is both feeling and discipline, fire and a majestic order and a radiant light in her late work that are beyond anything she has done before. These pictures transcend both personal emotion and esthetic theory. They speak with a purity and beauty that is unsurpassed in the special field of abstract art which Pereira has made her own.

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

The arrangement is chronological. The medium is oil on canvas unless otherwise noted. The dimensions are in inches, height preceding width. The dimensions of gouaches and drawings are sight. An asterisk indicates that the work is illustrated. Where the owner is not given, the work has been lent by Durlacher Bros.

Certain works are for sale. Prices will be furnished on request.

- * 1 ANCHOR. 1932. 38 x 48. Lent by the artist.
- 2 VENTILATORS. 1933. 34 x 42.
- 3 WHARF ANCHOR. 1934. 48 x 36.
- 4 MACHINE COMPOSITION. 1935. 34 x 42.
- * 5 MAN AND MACHINE. 1936. 36 x 48.
- 6 RED FORMS. 1937. Ink and gouache. 13⁵/₈ x 14.
- 7 RECTANGLES. 1938. 30 x 24. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. James S. Rice.
- * 8 WHITE RECTANGLE NO. 1. 1938. 24 x 30.
- * 9 THE RED AND BLUE. 1940. 34 x 24. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. James S. Rice.
- 10 COMPOSITION IN RED. 1941. 30 x 24. Lent by Howard University.
- 11 COMPOSITION IN WHITE. 1942. Mixed media on parchment with various fillers. 18 x 18. Lent by the Newark Museum.
- * 12 RED, YELLOW AND BLUE. 1942. 30 x 40. Lent by Mr. Marvin Small.
- 13 VIEW. 1942. Front plane, oil on parchment; back plane, mixed media on gesso panel. 24¹/₈ x 22. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gwathmey.
- * 14 WHITE LINES. 1942. Oil with various fillers on parchment. 25⁷/₈ x 21⁷/₈. Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
- 15 BLACK CONTROL. 1943. 40¹/₄ x 36¹/₄. Lent by the Baltimore Museum of Art.
- 16 EIGHT OBLONGS. 1943. Oil and gold leaf on parchment. 20 x 26. Lent by the State University of Iowa, Art Department.
- 17 REFLECTION. 1943. Front plane, mixed media and gold leaf on glass; back plane, tempera on board. 12¹/₂ x 11¹/₂. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Holger Cahill.
- * 18 TRANSPARENT PLANES. 1943. 28 x 34. Lent by Brandeis University.
- 19 GREEN DEPTH. 1944. 31 x 42. Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- 20 BLUE PREDOMINATES. 1945. 30 x 40. Lent by Mrs. Ione G. Walker.
- 21 TRANSIENT LINES. 1945. Mixed media on two planes of glass; back plane, oil on gesso panel. 16 x 14. Lent by Mr. Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
- 22 POLARIZED PAINTING. 1946. Lacquer on three planes of glass with two sheets of polaroid. 16¹/₂ x 15¹/₄.
- 23 TRANSLUCENT LINES. 1946. Mixed media on two planes of corrugated glass, front

plane sandblasted; back plane, oil on gesso panel. 24 x 18. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine.

*24 TRANSVERSE PARALLELS. 1946. Mixed media on two planes of corrugated glass, front plane sandblasted; back plane, oil on gesso panel. 24 x 22.

*25 TWO UP. 1946. 34 x 42.

26 FORMAL ARRANGEMENT. 1947. Gouache. 17 x 23. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Frank M. Goldsmith.

27 PROJECTING PLANES. 1947. 30 x 40. Lent by the Toledo Museum of Art.

28 YELLOW SQUARE. 1947. 28 x 34. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. B. Margolin.

*29 AFFLUENT SURFACE. 1948. Oil and metal leaf on parchment. 30 x 25¾.

*30 OBLIQUE PROGRESSION. 1948. 50 x 40. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

31 TRANSFLUX. 1948. Mixed media on two planes of glass, one fluted and one corrugated; back plane, oil on gesso panel. 10¾ x 22½.

32 BRIGHT DEPTH. 1949. 36 x 28¾.

33 DEEP VISION. 1949. 30 x 42.

*34 BRIGHT BEYOND. 1950. 30 x 40.

35 GREEN MASS. 1950. 40 x 50.

36 VERTICAL FLOW. 1950. 30 x 16. Lent by the Phillips Collection.

*37 COPPER LIGHT. 1951. Front plane, mixed media on parchment; copper strips be-

tween planes; back plane, casein on gesso panel. 18 x 17.

*38 EVAPORATING NIGHT. 1951. 36 x 30.

39 LIGHT IS GOLD. 1951. Mixed media on two planes of fluted glass; back plane, casein on gesso panel. 30 x 23. Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art.

*40 MELTING HORIZON. 1951. 35 x 50.

*41 SEVEN RED SQUARES. 1951. 40 x 50.

42 SUNRISE, SUNSET. 1951. 40 x 50.

43 TRANSFORMING GOLD. 1951. 40 x 50.

44 TWO BECOMES ONE. 1951. Front plane, mixed media on glass; back plane, casein on gesso panel. 22¼ x 18½. Lent by the artist.

45 WHERE ARE WE GOING? 1951. Ink and gouache. 17 x 23.

46 YOU. 1951. Front plane, mixed media on glass; back plane, tempera and metal leaf on gesso panel. 30 x 23. Lent by Mr. George Reavey.

47 CATHEDRAL LIGHTED SKY. 1952. Front plane, mixed media on hammered glass; back plane, mixed media on gesso panel. 36 x 28.

48 DAYBREAK LIGHT. 1952. 40 x 60.

49 THE DRUID BOY KING. 1952. Gouache. 21¼ x 26¾.

50 INCANDESCENT. 1952. 40 x 50.

*51 INSIDE — OUTSIDE. 1952. 50 x 30.

- 52 INTERWOVEN. 1952. Ink and gouache. 17¼ x 23½.
- 53 I WAKE IN SLEEP. 1952. Gouache and watercolor. 29 x 32.
- 54 RED TO ROSE. 1952. 40 x 30.
- *55 THE RIDDLE. 1952. Gouache. 21⅞ x 27⅞.
- 56 RUBY FLUX. 1952. Mixed media on two planes of glass, one hammered and one fluted; back plane, casein on gesso panel. 28 x 20.
- 57 SHOOTING STARS. 1952. Mixed media on two planes of fluted glass; back plane, casein on gesso panel. 24 x 40.
- *58 SOMEWHERE TODAY. 1952. Ink and gouache. 17¼ x 23⅞.
- *59 SPRING, TWELVE O'CLOCK. 1952. 30 x 50.
- 60 TRANSFORMING NIGHT. 1952. 40 x 30.
- NOTE: Nos. 2-4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 28, 33, 35, 39, 42-44, 46-48, 53, 56 and 57 are being shown at the Whitney Museum but not at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Des Moines Art Center or the San Francisco Museum of Art.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1907 August 5, born Chelsea, Mass., daughter of Emanuel and Hilda (Vanderbilt) Rice
- c.1912 Moved to the Berkshires with her parents, living in Pittsfield and in Great Barrington, Mass.
- c.1915 To Boston for about a year, then moved
- 1916 with her family to Brooklyn, N. Y., where they lived at 238 New York Avenue
- Attended public school and Eastern District High School in Brooklyn
- 1922 Death of her father. Completed commercial and secretarial courses in less than seven months. Assumed entire support of her family, working as a stenographer. During the next four years attended evening classes in design at the Traphagen School of Fashion and Washington Irving High School, in literature at New York University and in art at Washington Irving High School.
- 1927 October: enrolled in evening classes at the Art Students League, N. Y., studying for three years with Richard Lahey and Jan Matulka, and for one month, April 1933.
- 1929 January 8: married to Humberto Pereira, commercial artist and painter. Lived in New York. Continued to work as a secretary.
- 1931 Late summer, first trip to Europe, visiting
- 1932 Paris, where she worked briefly at the Académie Moderne, then Switzerland, Italy and North Africa, returning to the United States via Cherbourg, January 6. Summer in Provincetown, Mass.
- 1935 Fall: planned courses in industrial design
- 1939 for the WPA Federal Art Project, New York. Design Laboratory. Instructor of design synthesis, painting and composition, January 1936-37. Remained on faculty when laboratory was taken over by the Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians, September 1937. Resigned October 1939. Worked on WPA Fasel Division 1937-39 and did experimental work in the Project's new technical laboratory, 1939. First paintings on glass, 1939.
- 1938 January 28: received a divorce
- 1941 First paintings on parchment. To Nantucket where she spent summers through 1948 and two weeks summer of 1949. September: death of her sister Dorothy
- 1942 September 26: married to George Wellington Brown. Taught design at Pratt Institute through January.
- 1943
- 1944 September: first museum purchase, *Composition in White*, acquired by The Newark Museum.
- 1949 September 18-November 29: in Paris.
- 1950 June 6: received a divorce. To England. Spent the summer working in London with brief visits to Wiltshire and Lancashire. Married to George Reavey September 9. About September 20 settled in Salford, a suburb of Manchester. December: exhibited two paintings at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London.
- 1951 May 9, returned to the United States. June 13-July 15: taught art classes at Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana. Returned to New York where George Reavey joined her in the fall.

Awards: \$500. award, Pepsi-Cola Exhibition, 1946; Honorable Mention and \$100. award, La Tausea Art Competition, 1947.

One-man exhibitions: A.C.A. Gallery, N. Y., 1933, 1934, 1935, 1946 (Feb. & Dec.), 1949; Theodore A. Kohn & Son, N. Y., 1934; East River Gallery, N. Y., 1938; Howard University Gallery of Art, 1938; Julien Levy Gallery, N. Y., 1939; Art of This Century, N. Y., 1944; Arts Club of Chicago, 1945; Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, 1947; San Francisco Museum of Art, 1947; Barnett Aden Gallery, Washington, D. C., 1948-49; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Portland Art Museum, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum (with Loren MacIver), 1950; Memphis Academy of Arts, 1951; Syracuse University, 1951; Baltimore Museum of Art, 1951; Durlacher Bros., N. Y., 1951; Phillips Gallery, Washington, D. C., 1952; Dayton Art Institute, 1952.

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The place of publication of books is New York unless otherwise noted. The place of publication of periodicals has not been noted unless foreign.

Abbreviations: Ag August, Ap April, bibl bibliography, D December, ed edited, F February, il illustration(s), Ja January, Je June, Jl July, mag magazine, Mr March, My May, N November, O October, rev review, S September.

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